SHORT STORIES
EDITED BY G. ARTHUR PEARSON (OF PEARSON'S WEEKLY)
No. 504. FOR WEEK ENDING AUGUST 27TH, 1898. [ONE PENNY.

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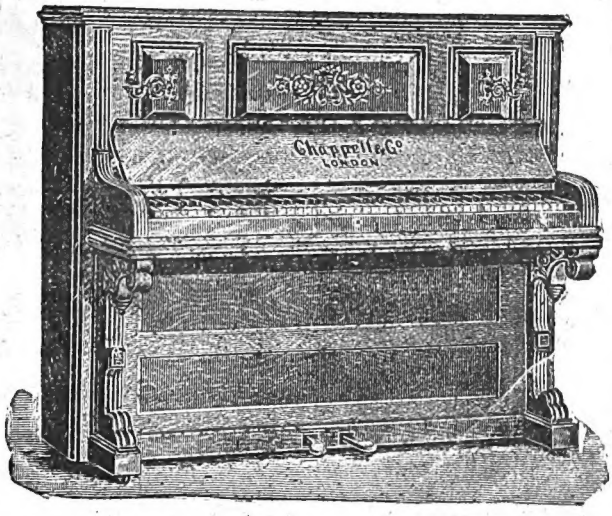

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SHORT STORIES

Edited By C. ARTHUR PEARSON

No. 504. ONE PENNY.

For the Week ending August 27th, 1898.

UNTOLD TALES OF THE INDIAN MUTINY.

IV.—The Lights at the Delhi Gate.

By H. HUNTER.

THE old fort at Agra—what a crowd of memories cluster round its battlements and bastions! What legends, mostly grim and grisly, linger about its pillared courts and sculptured arches. What tales are told concerning its long galleries, where the ladies of the Zenana used to play "hide and seek" with the Emperor. What stories of the gloomy range of underground vaults, the secret stairs, and mysterious passages; and of the curious chambers concealed in the masonry of its great carven gateways.

What phantoms flit through its gleaming pavilions, or hover round it massive towers, or haunt its terraced roof and airy colonnades!

The old palace of Shah Jehan, dominated by the dark red wall of the great fort, and with the sacred waters of the Jumna flowing in a deep channel at its base, was indeed a place in which to dream dreams and see visions.

But the story which I have to tell cannot be contemptuously dismissed as the one, or politely referred to the other.

Yet few stranger have ever been told outside the pages of sensational romance.

It was never doubted by any of the large number of English, civil and military, who were living at the time in the fort—never doubted even by the three or four leading civilians, who, of all men there present, were

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the least disposed to credulity, after the report of Colonel Fraser and the ocular demonstration afforded them.

The Delhi Gate of the old fort at Agra, imposing as it looked to the eye, contained only two or three moderate-sized apartments, a few small chambers and several narrow staircases and alleyways by which access was gained to the roof above the main gateway, and to the battlements beyond.

In one of these apartments in the first months of the Mutiny was quartered a clerk attached to the Stores Department.

The man was an Eurasian. In his veins ran the blood of two continents, Europe and Asia; a mixture despised in the East, and by none more than by the English rulers of the Empire of India. There are reasons for this which do not concern our story; but, during the stress of the Mutiny, the fact was too often allowed to prejudice the opinion of the men in authority in many of the affected districts.

Agra was no exception. The civil officials, the magistrate and the collector particularly, would listen to nothing that reached them through Eurasian channels. That an Eurasian gave the information was, in their eyes, enough to condemn it as untrustworty. Nothing coming from Eurasian sources could move the Lieutenant-Governor to action. It was tainted. Eurasians didn't "count" in the calculations of the Anglo-Indians responsible for the government of Agra.

The Stores clerk was a cut above the average run of his race, and naturally resented the low estimate put upon his blood by the chief civil authorities of the place. His room in the Delhi Gate commanded a view of the great wall which inclosed the fort on the landward side. From the window he could see straight down the Rowney—the dry ditch which ran at the bottom of the wall.

One evening, when the charcoal fires began to glow about the fountain, and the English families who had found shelter in the fort were assembled as usual in the great square of the Palace, for the social meal which closed each eventful day, it was pretty evident, from the eager talk and suppressed excitement, that something had occurred to give the daily gossip a fresher flavour, and a newer interest.

A rumour, indeed, had gone about from group to group, till it had travelled the entire circuit of the square, which had set every tongue wagging to the same tune, and filled every heart with vague feelings of uneasiness, apprehension, and alarm.

In those days, filled with excitement, when the improbable and the unexpected were happening every hour, nothing was too wild or too extravagant for belief—and, with the old fort a perfect rabbit-warren of underground passages, extending in all directions and very imperfectly explored, there was ample foundation for the imagination to build on.

Any number of rebels might find concealment in the long range of subterranean chambers beneath the Palace. The mutineers, who were believed to be in the suburbs and villages across the river, could get access to these chambers, it was said, through the secret passages which extended under the Rowney—the dry ditch—and had exits in different quarters of the city.

The rumour, circulating through the Palace Square on this particular evening in July '57, declared that strange noises had been heard in the Rowney at unholy hours, and strange lights had been seen there long after gun fire had warned everybody to retire and the bugle had sounded "lights out."

The story, it was reported, orignated with a clerk whose room in the Delhi Gate looked into the ditch, which it commanded as far as the angle of the wall.

"Yes," said young Joyce, the Deputy-Assistant Collector, who was drinking tea with Mrs. Cubitt's party, "with that half-caste chap who weighs out the grain rations, Dick Costello—drunken Dick, as we call him. The man's never sober more than half his time—not but what they say he does his work just as well in one condition as the other."

"Well," put in Lieutenant Batson, who had just come off duty at the Bengalee bastion, and for whom Nellie Cubitt had reserved a chair next her own, "it isn't every fellow who can plead such a good, sound, reasonable excuse for his liquor. I wonder the man isn't drunk every day in the week instead of only making it three out of seven. He certainly deserves to be commended for his moderation."

"Was there any truth in that story?" inquired a sad-looking lady, one of the fugitives from Gwalior.

"Truth!" chirped the cheerful Lieutenant, "why, my dear madam, it was all truth. And the very part which one would be most inclined to reject is really the truest half of it.

"When the mutineers broke into his room in the city, Costello was about three quarters through with a bottle of Exshaw's 'best.' He received them with all the grace and courtesy of Government House, invited them to be seated, apologised for not having glasses enough to go round, assisted them to smash his mirrors and break his furniture; danced with them round the bonfire they made in the street, and yelled louder than any rebel in the mob.

"They thought him a lunatic, but he was only drunk; and, while every other Christian, man, woman, and child, was brutally murdered and mutilated, Costello was left unharmed. Lunatics, you know, are always objects of reverence in the East."

"But Mr. Drummond, I'm afraid, hasn't much sympathy with Dick sober and none at all with Dick drunk."

"I understand," said Joyce, "that he's threatened Costello, that if he finds him repeating that silly story again—about the lights at the gate, I mean—he'll make an example of him."

"Yes," hummed Lieutenant Batson, "as he did of the corn merchant who sold grain to the Commissariat contractor.

"The poor devil got two months in 'chokee' for helping the General to feed the garrison. Oh! we're a happy family, aren't we? Let the military issue an order, the civilians immediately publish another; and the Mussulman says to the Hindoo: 'See how these Christians love one another.'"

"With the sword hanging over our heads we spend most of our time in squabbling and quarrelling."

"We haven't got a man here; that's what's the matter with Agra," said a quiet spoken individual in the uniform of the mounted militia. "A man who can grasp the situation and 'sit firm.' The magistrate swears by the Mahommedans, and the Lieutenant-Governor supports him. The General swears at them, but lacks capacity and trusts to luck. The Colonels are good men and true, but their hands are tied: on one side by military etiquette, on the other by civil authority.

"This story of the lights at the Delhi Gate would have been investigated and disposed of before ever it got to be the common gossip of the fort, if we'd had a man here like Lawrence or Nicholson. But Drummond

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thinks he's done enough when he's called Costello a drunken fool; and Mr. Colvin declines to hear a word against Drummond.

"Heigh-ho! There goes Fraser. Excuse me, Mrs. Cubitt," said the militia man rising. "I want a word with the Colonel."

* * * * * *

"Yes, I know what Mr. Drummond has threatened, but you can leave me to deal with that, I think," said Colonel Fraser to Dick Costello, the morning after Mrs. Cubitt's tea party in the Palace Square. "Now then, let's have the whole story. It can't be a very long one, and tell it as straight as you know how. You needn't look round the room in that scared fashion, man. There's nobody behind the grass mats; there's not a soul within hearing but ourselves. You're telling the tale to none but me, understand. So now, eyes front, if you please."

"Well, Colonel," stammered the unfortunate Stores clerk, by no means assured of the Colonel's power to protect him, and with the sense of an unholy secret weighing like lead upon him, "as you say, it isn't much of a story, and Mr. Drummond——"

"How did it begin, man, and when did it start?" interrupted the Colonel impatiently. "Give us a day or a date, can't you? Something definite to go upon. Be careful what you say; but see you don't keep anything back."

"It began with the noises, Colonel," said the man, breaking into a perspiration from sheer fright. "I was lying awake one night—it's dreadful hot up in that room ——"

The Colonel fidgeted.

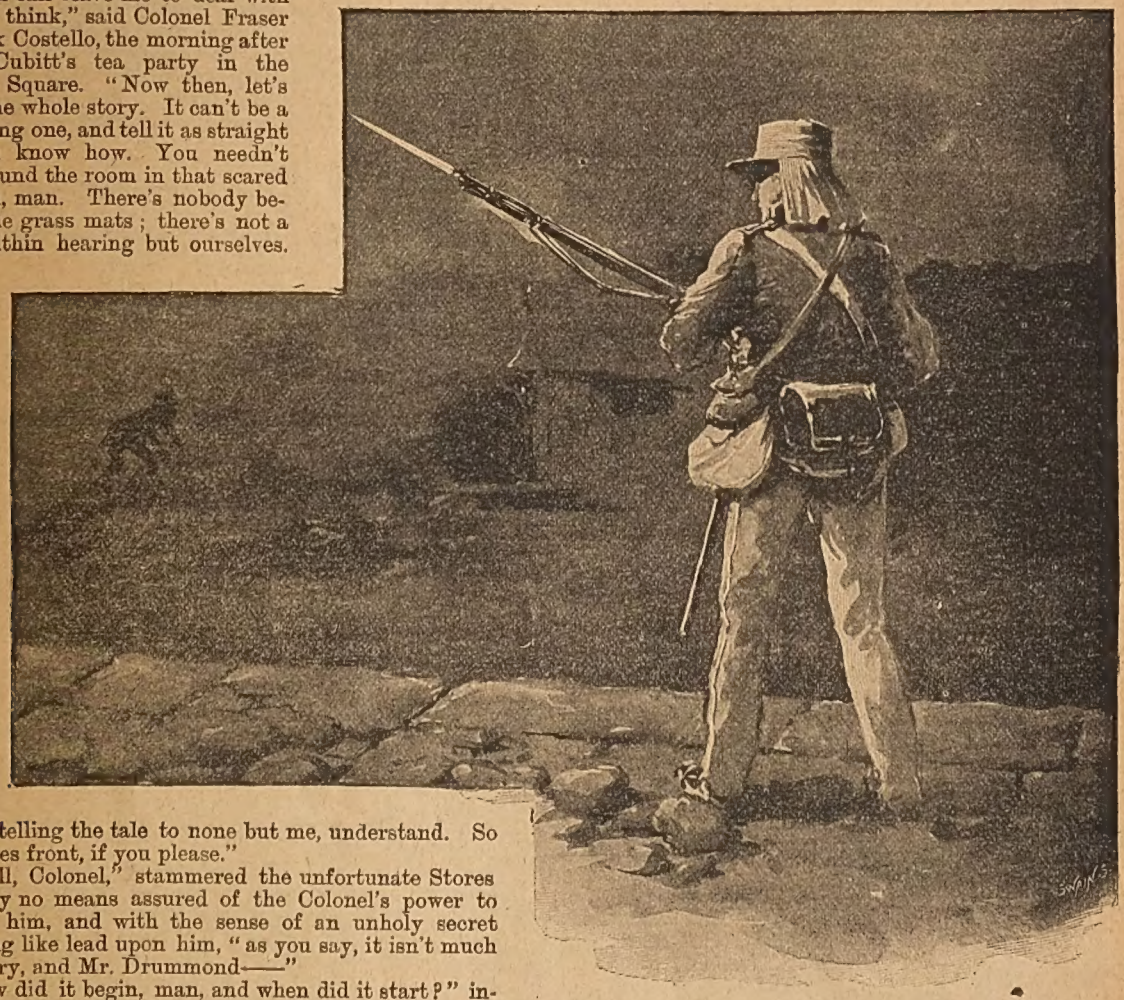
"It was the Thursday in last week, Colonel," continued Costello with a gasp.

He had caught the look in the Colonel's eye.

"Just a week ago to-day, sir. I was lying awake. I hadn't been to sleep and I wasn't dreaming.

"I was thinking of the fine new house which Jotee Persham, the military contractor, had built himself out of the commissariat money, when I heard a sound like somebody tapping with a hammer. I didn't pay much attention to it at first. But it continued—'tap-tap,' at intervals of every few seconds.

"That's a hammer striking a chisel, thinks I, after it had been going for a bit. But I didn't know the sappers worked in the Rowney all night. Some new order out, I s'pose!



He saw a shadowy form emerge from the shelter of the wall.

"I lay listening for a matter of p'raps twenty minutes, wondering what it might be and thinking every moment it would cease. But it kept on 'tap-tap' as regular as the beat of the clock on the wall there. Now and again, the hammer would seem to miss the chisel and strike the stone. The difference in the sound was plainly perceptible.

"All at once it occurred to me, as a singular circumstance, that only *one* hammer should be going if the sappers were really at work in the ditch below. So I got up and went to the window. There wasn't a soul to be seen. There wasn't so much as a dog moving. The Rowney was deserted. But the tapping went on as

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before. I didn't half like the sound of that 'tap-tap,' coming up at regular intervals from the silence below.

"It seemed to come from the wall below the gate. I listened at the window for a good bit, expecting to see someone. But I saw nothing. The noise, however, continued without ceasing. When it stopped, I don't know. It was going, I believe, when I fell asleep.

"The following night I heard it again. It began about the same time—as near midnight as makes no difference. I listened again. It came from the same place—about twenty yards from the gate, at the foot of the wall. There was no other sound, no voices, nothing but the regular tap of iron on iron, or iron on stone.

"Next morning I reported it."

The man stopped. He was shaking like a leaf. The Colonel looked hard at him, drew his own conclusions, and, taking a bottle from a dwarf cabinet, poured out a measure of brandy. Adding thereto a small quantity of water he handed it to the man.

"Drink this, Costel.o," he said, "it will steady your nerves a bit. You've got a touch of hysteria. There's nothing for you to be frightened of, my good fellow. I give you the word of an English officer, you shan't be punished for speaking the truth, or what you believe to be the truth. Just tell me plainly all you saw and heard and leave the rest to me."

"I don't make so much, sir, of Mr. Drummond calling me a drunken fool," said poor Dick, querulously. "I know I drink more than's good for me; but I wasn't drunk when I heard them noises, nor yet when I saw the lights; and I ain't quite a fool, either. Would they trust me to keep the Stores accounts if they thought me a fool?

"But I've got something to tell, Colonel, that gives me the shivers only to think of—something that'll make you turn against me worse'n Mr. Drummond, for he ain't heard it, or you must be a won'nerful good sort, Colonel—'cuse me, sir. Something, sir, that I wouldn't tell Mr. Drummond—no, not if he promised me a pension! And the worst of it is, Colonel, that I should be satisfied if I knew I was drunk; but I was sober, sir, as sober as Mr. Drummond himself. Yet I'll take my dying oath I saw all four of 'em."

"Four of whom?" said the Colonel, thoroughly interested at last.

"The four English soldiers who went into the vaults and never came out again."

Colonel Fraser sat and stared at the man for some minutes without speaking.

"Do you know how long ago that is?" said he at length, without taking his eyes off Costello.

"Fifty years, they say, or thereabouts."

"And you saw those men?"

"I saw them, Colonel, as plain as I see you. I knew them by their English uniforms and their white English faces. But I told you you'd turn against me."

"I thought you said you saw *nothing*," rejoined the Colonel severely.

"Nothing, till the night before I saw the lights in the shed. And then I saw those men in the bottom of the ditch at the foot of the wall, not twenty yards from the gate."

"What were they doing?"

"Stooping over something."

Colonel Fraser was silent for a moment.

"And you saw the lights on Monday?"

"Yes."

"Last night?"

"I didn't look, Colonel. I've seen too much. I don't want to see any more. Let them look whom it concerns. Drunken fool, is the best word they've got for me—you don't believe me, Colonel Fraser, any more'n Mr. Drummond," added the man, sulkily, after a pause, during which the Colonel sat staring at him in a way that was trying to the nerves. "But I'll swear it by all the oaths in the High Court—on the Koran, the Ganges or the Bible."

"The lights and the noises, Costello, are one thing—at least they come within the practical and the possible. They are capable of being traced and investigated; but I must say you've shaken my confidence in the story by introducing the supernatural into it. The most charitable explanation of the matter is to suppose that you were——"

"——drunk, of course."

"Overstrung was the word I was going to use," said the Colonel, quietly.

"Well, I've got no more to tell, Colonel," said the man looking up sullenly, "and if you've quite done with me I'll be glad to go."

"You haven't mentioned this—er—this new experience—about the four soldiers, Costello, to anyone?"

"Mr. Drummond said quite enough, sir, to keep me from opening my mouth to a living soul—and I wish now that I hadn't told you, Colonel. 'Tain't done me no good."

"It shall not do you any harm, Costello; and now, tell me this one thing more and then you may go. Did the light appear in any other part of the Rowney, or only in the shed?"

"Only in the shed."

"Thanks, I think that will do," and Dick Costello left the Colonel's quarters smarting under the conviction that in all Agra there was no more deeply injured man.

* * * * * *

"What does Mr. Drummond say to it now—eh? Drunken Dick's scored off him nicely. Reckon he don't feel quite so big as he did; and the military aren't sorry."

"It's a fair take-in, old man, I own; and it's made somebody look as if it hasn't agreed with him. But then, I think it's rather something of a 'let-down' for a good many of us, ain't it?"

The speakers were Teddy Joyce of the Revenue Department and Lieutenant Batson of the Bengal Artillery. The place was the great marble-flagged Square of the old Palace; the time, evening; the occasion, a tea party given by Mrs. Cubitt, the hostess of the evening, already a week old, when the rumour of lights at the Delhi Gate had first been whispered in the Square.

"Have they found who put the shed up?" inquired the lady, handing the Lieutenant a cup of tea.

"No and never will. They'll never be any wiser than they are to-day."

"And what have they discovered?" asked pretty Miss Nellie, eager for the story which ought to be at the back of the mystery.

"Nothing, absolutely nothing."

The party forming Mrs. Cubitt's social group on the marble flags of the Pearl Zenana, stared blankly at the speaker.

"But, I say, old man!" said Joyce "the shed, hang it all!—that couldn't have been put up without hands. That was substantial enough, anyhow. Surely the engineers know who knocked that together."

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Lieutenant Batson shrugged his shoulders.

"Ask 'em," he said ironically. "I reckon Drunken Dick's given the whole garrison a pill to swallow that they can't digest.

"You've read the story of Jonah's gourd? Well, that's the story of this shed. There was a shed in the Rowney one morning; there was none there when the men knocked off in the evening before. It had sprung up during the night.

"Fact, my boy; you needn't look so incredulous. We had hundreds of fellows at work in the Rowney—natives most of 'em. Nobody made it his business to inquire about the shed; and now everybody denies all knowledge of it whatever.

"Cotton and Fraser, being military men, don't try to juggle with the facts. They honestly admit themselves beaten. But it ain't satisfactory by a long chalk."

"They'll never believe it at home," murmured Mrs. Cubitt, meditatively.

"I don't fancy any of us would venture to tell the tale in England," said the Lieutenant, "but I've got all the details if ever I feel the 'call.' I can go one better than most, for I saw the men with my own eyes."

Nellie looked at him, speechless with awe and wonder.

"Yes," he continued, "I did. And nothing, I think, that's hid in the future can beat, for me, the experience of last night.

"The Colonel, you know," he said, addressing Mrs. Cubitt, "posted a trustworthy sentry below the window in the Delhi Gate, with instructions to watch the shed, and if he saw a light in it, to fire.

"Not a sound broke the stillness of the Rowney. But about 12.30 he saw a shadowy form emerge from the shelter of the wall, creep along the ditch and enter the shed. The next moment a light shone through the cracks in the boards, and from a small aperture near the roof which served for a window. A minute later the sentry challenged and fired.

"In the morning the shed was searched. The shot had smashed a water-jar which had stood in a corner; but of the visitor there was no trace, nor of the lamp, nor of any means of procuring a light.

"The light disappeared the moment the man fired. The figure he saw no more. The next night the Colonel posted *two* men at the gate, one being a corporal. There was light enough in the sky to distinguish objects at a short distance.

"Soon after twelve, the men became aware that *two* figures were moving rapidly and noiselessly along the line of the wall in the direction of the shed. The corporal could see them with greater distinctness than the private; and he says they wore the uniform of the British Line before Waterloo. They entered the shed together, and almost immediately the light appeared. The shed seemed to fill suddenly with a strong, white light. The corporal challenged.

"There was no reply, and both fired.

"But when the shed was searched in the morning, it was drawn blank. There was nothing that would help to elucidate the mystery that had gathered round that rough structure in the Rowney which had been erected by some person or persons unknown. Only, the water-jar, which had been smashed on the previous night, had been replaced by another.

"The light vanished as soon as the shot swere fired; repeating in this, its behaviour on the first occasion.

"'But there should be *four*,' said the Colonel with as ghastly grin when the corporal made his report. The story which has been told for nearly fifty years, says that four soldiers went into the vaults to hunt for hid treasure, and never came out again—which,' said he 'I think is not at all improbable, considering the number of galleries and passages they would have to traverse. Go and find the other two.'

"It was said in a joke, but when the sergeant told him at ten o'clock the same night that he was going to take charge himself of the post at the Delhi Gate, the Colonel said:

"'I needn't tell you, sergeant, how anxious I am to get this matter rid up. It's all over the fort, and the Lieutenant-Govenor isn't half pleased about it.'

"There were four men on duty that night at the gate; the sergeant, a corporal, and two privates. The history of the two previous nights was repeated, save that on this occasion the number of figures which entered the shed was increased by *one*. Number three had turned up.

"In the morning the Colonel directed me to have a sergeant's file ready at ten p.m., and he would go with them himself to the Gate and surround the shed directly the figures had entered it.

"At ten precisely we drew up in the shadow of the great Gate; but the Colonel had been sent for by Mr. Colvin and the command devolved upon me. I had merely to carry out the Colonel's instructions.

"It was a clear night, and we could see everything distinctly. We could almost count the boards in the shed.

"At half past twelve exactly, by my watch, four figures came out of the wall below the Jehangiree Mahal and made direc ly for the shed. They were clad in the old British uniform of the Line, and moved like skirmishers going into action. They moved without noise, and so quickly that before I could get my men together, they had gained the hut. Before we had gone a dozen steps the light shone out. Every man in the little company saw it. There was nothing ghostly about it. It seemed to come from a powerful lamp, fitted probably with an Argand burner.

"The four dark silent figures, creeping with bent backs, swiftly and stealthily through the gloomy void of the great ditch, had given the affair a certain touch of the uncanny; but in the light which shone from the shed, there was no suggestion of the weird and the supernatural.

"I had posted the men, three on each side, and was just creeping up myself to take a peep through the chinks in the boards, when suddenly, without sign or sound, the light went out. It was a queer experience.

"'Fire!' I cried, springing back, and on the instant, twelve shots riddled the shed from end to end.

"We remained on the ground till dawn, when the Colonel and Mr. Drummond came down, and under their direction the shed was removed. There was nothing in it but the water-jar aforesaid.

"How any living thing could have escaped the storm of balls which rained through it I cannot explain, any more than I can say how it was we found no trace of lamp or lighter.

"The ground was dug away all round for a depth of three feet; but nothing was discovered that would indicate a concealed passage, or, indeed, any means by which exit could have been found from the Rowney or concealment within it."

As Lieutenant Batson ceased speaking, the gun from the bastion warned the little crowd in the Square that the hour for retiring—nine o'clock—had arrived, and slowly the social gathering began to break up.

The mystery of the lights at the Delhi Gate, like so many other incidents connected with the Great Sepoy Mutiny, remains a mystery still.

They were never seen after the removal of the shed.

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THE HOUSE OF THE LIGHTED WINDOWS.

A Story of 1860.

THAT voyage is memorable to me, not only for the confidence the Government showed in thus employing me, but also for a melancholy circumstance connected with it which caused me many hours of fruitless regret—I may say, almost of remorse. The negotiation was without good result; I speak of it because it involved me in something of an adventure, and also because my conscience is not at ease to this day for the thoughtlessness into which I was led.

The schooner was no sooner under way than I had reason to retire to my state-room, for we laboured from the very first with a heavy sea.

However, when not too unwell to appear with my companions, I found them not unpleasant fellows.

The captain was a cautious old fellow with little to say and with a rather disconcerting way of shutting up one eye, and making long and silent observations of whoever happened to attract his attention by addressing him. The mate informed me that this habit was contracted from his gazing many hours at a time through a greenish-brass spyglass which was his constant companion.

As for the mate, I must say that I took quite a fancy to him. He was an extremely agreeable young Irishman, though saucy and sadly given to flattery, but with an unusual amount of quickness and discernment; for he said to me one evening, as we beguiled the time with cards:

"Is it in the interest of the Government that ye're making this voyage?"

"That it is, Mr. Kilgore," said I. "And it's very important that we don't go to pieces in the meantime," for the ship was dancing to a lively tune.

"That's just what I was going to say," he answered, with a laugh. "I have no great objections to getting into port with a whole skin mesilf."

"You seamen take it very well, sir," said I, with an attempt at cheerfulness, "but I am what you would call a land-lubber, eh?"

"You haven't extraordinary good sea-legs, and that's a fact," said the mate.

"Yes," said I, returning to the orignal subject, "if my papers do not arrive when due, important complications may arise."

"Be jabers, if we'd known that, we'd have been shy of taking ye on board. It's a great responsibility to drown a plenipotenteeary."

I will not say but that I was uneasy, especially when a lurch of the ship sent the cards flying about the room. But when I had recovered myself, I stared sternly at my companion. There was such a twinkle in his knowing turn-up nose—I will say, before I forget it, that all the power of expression of his face seemed to be concentrated in that organ—that if I were not inclined to pity him for his tragic end, I might doubt if he held quite a respectful attitude toward a man of my position, not to mention the august matters of State with which I was entrusted.

However, I took no further notice of his remark than to assume towards him a more distant manner; though I was really concerned to know if the storm were in truth more than ordinarily dangerous in the experienced eye of a seaman.

"I presume," said I, "I presume that such a tempest as this is a very frequent occurence at sea?"

"Sure, and that's very true. You would be surprised to know how many vessels go down in a year."

"You take it very coolly, sir," said I.

"That I don't, I assure ye," he replied, though he smiled pleasantly.

"May I inquire the cause of these storms?" I asked, to shift the disagreeable subject.

"Bedad, there's a difference of opinion. The captain will tell ye that it's the beginning of the equinox, but the men maintain that it's owing to the troubled spirits of seafaring men who have walked the plank into these waters or swung from the yard-arm of pirate vessels while rounding this point."

"Then we're keeping close along the shore?" I asked, with some relief.

"That's just what troubles the men, Mr. Ogilvie," returned the mate. "They'd rather be any number of leagues out at sea than hugging this coast."

"Is it indeed so dangerous?" I cried. "Rocks and breakers, eh?"

"Why, no; it's not that. It's because of an uncommon ghostly house by the shore. It's deserted, and has an ill name; for any dark night ye may see the windows lighted up in a way that is enough to send a ship to perdition at the sight of it. It stands on a cape and commands a view of the sea in all directions. I'll be happy to show ye the lights if ye have no objections to going aloft and getting wet."

I declined the offer, for I had extreme objections to "going aloft and getting wet."

The mate, I take it, would have entertained me all night with his yarns, had not the increasing storm demanded his attention.

All hands being on deck, I was left alone below. The rest of the evening was spent in complete misery, for the wind blew a most terrific gale. What earlier in the evening I had called a storm was nothing in comparison

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with this that we were having now. It was impossible to remain upright, and I wonder that I escaped with a sound bone in my body.

"I will never," said I, "set foot on a ship again," and I am not ashamed to say that I got upon my knees and said my prayers; for in my day all public men were religious men.

The mate appeared at my state-room door a little later. He was wringing wet and very cheerful.

"I'm afraid your papers won't come jue, Mr. Ogilvie," he said, "for the ship's sprung a leak."

"For Heaven's sake, my dear fellow, don't desert me," said I.

"By me sowl," began the Irishman, composedly, but the captain, passing the door with his valuables, called out.

"Mr. Ogilvie," said he, "we'll have to take to the boats, for the ship's in a bad condition."

I do not know how I got on deck. The first I remember is finding myself in a boat with the mate giving me brandy.

I will not deny that I was prodigiously afraid; I can stand most dangers on dry land, but may I be preserved from the sea!

We learnt afterward, when the bodies were washed ashore, that our companions in the other boats had no such luck as we; they must have capsized at the outset, and it's a miracle to me that we landed as successfully as we did.

We were carried far beyond the point where the men desired to disembark. I was in no condition to observe their dissatisfaction until after we were safe ashore, when I could not but notice that they showed much less delight in their deliverance than might have been expected. It made no odds to me where we landed, so that my feet felt the firm earth again.

When I had recovered myself sufficiently—though the mate said I was still "uncommon groggy" on my feet—I was very much for seeking shelter for the rest of the night, as the wind chilled me to the bone. But the men were standing in groups whispering to each other as though in fear of some danger. It seemed that we had landed within but a few yards of the mysterious house of the lighted windows.

The men declared that there was no sign of habitation for miles round, and there we stood in the thick darkness with the sea rushing up to our feet on one side, and with the house duskily looming on the other. I might have fancied that we were indeed "between the devil and the deep sea" had I not been taken up with such commonplace discomforts as a chilly skin.

I did not wonder at the men's reluctance to land on such a coast, though I may say that I saw nothing unusual about the windows of the house. But when the clouds were blown from the face of the moon, about as ill-looking a pile was disclosed as ever I wished to see, and I made no doubt that the men had been influenced by its dreary air to imagine the unusual appearances of which the mate had spoken.

It was an immense rough-cast stone house, with the plaster coming off in spots, as though an eruption had broken out upon the old building. Originally it could not have stood so close down to the water, but at the time when I saw it, the steps and the posts which supported the floor of the front verandah were under water during high tides and storms; and the whole building seemed to be gradually sinking into the sand, which at the sides and back came nearly up to the lowest windows.

Indeed, the foundations were beginning to be so eaten away that the walls had a tipsy, dangerous look, as if they had not long to stand, and it is not possible that the house could have withstood to the present day this steady encroachment of the waters and the sand.

There was one curious circumstance connected with the house which must have added to its bad reputation. It stood in such a position that the *débris* of the ocean, floating remains of wrecks, the offal of passing vessels, was apt to collect during high water under the broad verandah which faced the sea.

Indeed, the next day we were shocked to find the body of one of the ship's company from the capsized boat wedged under the steps, and I shuddered to think of how much might be revealed if the sand under that porch should be examined.

Many of these remarks I am making from information gathered later, for at the time I was less concerned about the character of the house than about my chattering teeth, so that I scoffed at the fears of my companions and urged them to join with me in taking possession of the building.

The men drew back, and I noticed that my merry friend, the mate, made himself exceedingly small. The captain had no thoughts but for his ship.

"Where are we to spend the night?" said I.

"Not in that house," muttered one of the men. "It's haunted."

"Haunted or not," I said, quite myself again, "I'm not going to stay here in the cold."

"But I don't like the looks of the house mesilf," said the mate.

"You're surely never afraid of a lonely house, Mr. Kilgore!" exclaimed I, sarcastically. I fancied that I had hold of his weak point.

"I afraid? Bedad, and that don't come very well from yourself, Mr. Ogilvie." Then he turned blusteringly to the men: "Come on, ye blithering idjits; but if ye're afraid, stay where ye are and welcome." And with a great show of unconcern he followed my lead.

Most of the men preferred the open air, though two or three from pure shame accompanied us to the house. The captain lingered behind; to do him justice it was rather to see the last of his ship than for fear of the suspicious refuge which I had shamed the mate into sharing with me.

The house was completely empty; but in the first room we entered, there was a broad fire-place which the men filled with rotten wood from the gaping windows and the wainscoting, and we soon had a roaring fire and a roomful of monstrous shadows. Mr. Kilgore had recourse to his brandy bottle for comfort, but anathematised me softly when he found that I had near emptied it while in the boat. The men sat round the fire on their heels and talked noisily to keep up their spirits.

For my part, I was much impressed by the sounds of the storm. The old house groaned and creaked in the tempest, and at each large gust I felt sure it was coming down about our ears. We were almost in the midst of the uproar of the sea; I could scarce believe that it was on land that I stood when I heard the intermittent splash of the water over the verandah. Sometimes an unusually large wave would be broken into foam against the front door, and the water leaked and dripped unceasingly in the cellar.

As long as the storm lasted the men were in an exhilarated condition and passed the time in relating the most monstrous yarns about former shipwrecks. I was

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very much pleased with their candour in admitting their fear during these experiences.

"I suppose it takes only such uncommonly stiff gentlemen as Mr. Kilgore to go through such an adventure as to-night's without turning a hair," I remarked.

"Ah, and ye're having fun at my expense after having near devoured me brandy bottle," said he.

"I'll restore your brandy bottle fourfold," I answered, "if you'll be so kind as to restore me to my friends."

"But I can't resthore the peace of the world if your papers don't arrive at their desteenation, I fancy," said the mate.

"Oh, I did not wish to give the impression that the peace of the world will be endangered, but that important complications may arise," I replied.

The time thus passed in pleasant conversation between the mate and myself; but as the storm abated, I noticed that the men became depressed and silent, muttering to themselves more than once that they wished themselves "safe at sea."

"But what reason have you to suppose that these appearances in the windows have a supernatural origin?" I asked.

"There's been more than one murder done here in Capta n Kidd's time which isn't over comfortable to talk of now," said one of the men.

"Ye may save your breath," said the mate. "Mr. Ogilvie has no belief in ghosts. By Jove, though, if he'd seen the lights himself, he sing a different chune."

"And what think you your hardy mariners would say if they came unexpectedly on our lights? If they would be but hardy enough to take a look in at the window, sure they'd see some pretty substantial ghosts."

As we were speaking, the captain entered; he was noticeably pale, and I could not repress a feeling of pity for him.

"Ah, sir," said I, "the poor ship is gone at last, is it?"

"Yes, it is gone long since! But that is no matter now.

"Have any of you been upstairs? No? But there was a light in the room above you; it appeared a short time and then went out."

The men were terror-stricken at this intelligence, but I had begun to expostulate when my mouth was summarily closed.

Directly overhead, cutting my words short, came one loud thump, followed by no reverberations or echoes or anything that could linger in the ear to reassure one that there had been a sound at all. I could almost have believed that I had fancied it, had I not seen the eyes of the men starting with fear.

"What was that?" I asked sharply.

The mate crossed himself and moved toward the door where the other men pushed past him. I myself had recovered instantly; I believe that I said somewhere that I am not easily frightened except at sea, but I ought not to attribute courage to myself as the sole cause for my coolness at such a time; for I felt conscious of a very strong desire to show these men that I was not so timorous a creature as by my behaviour on the ship and on the boat they may have been led to suppose.

"Something has blown down upstairs, and, for my part, I will stay where I am," said I.

My explanation seemed so reasonable that the men paused and strained their ears. The captain shut his superfluous eye and inspected me, but I was too much interested in the discomfort of the mate to heed his stare.

"Oh, fie, Mr. Kilgore," I said, "you, a seaman, are not scared at a bit of wind!"

It still clung to me that he had enjoyed my terror at sea; but before the night was over, I regretted my idle words.

"The mon does not live that could throw fear in me face and not answer for it, Mr. Ogilvie!" he said, flashing round at me, though he was uncommonly white about the gills as he spoke.

"I never refuse to answer for my words, sir," said I, "though I am willing to overlook a little heat in youth."

"Sir, will ye take back what ye said, then? You have as good as called me a coward twice this night," said the mate.

"Indeed, sir—" I began, with some haughtiness; but the captain interrupted me.

"Gentlemen, gentlemen!" he cried, "you are surely not going to make a quarrel out of a jest! Mr. Ogilvie, I thought you a man of sense."

"I have no wish to quarrel with the young man," I answered, somewhat abashed, "indeed, he showed himself a brave gentleman during the storm, and here's my hand to it, Mr. Kilgore."

We shook hands, and I have ever been thankful that our last words were those of friendship.

"And now to clear up the mystery of these sights and sounds," he said, going to the door again. "If ye say the word, faith, I'll go up and investeegate."

"Not alone, at any rate," I said; "if you have no objections, I'll accompany you."

But he was inclined to take offence at this, and persisted in going alone; he was bound to vindicate his honour, he said.

I am sure he was afraid, and indeed it was no great discredit to him, for I think he feared nothing in the universe, so long as it remained in the flesh. He put a bold face upon it, however, and started on his little tour of discovery.

We waited and listened to the sound of his footsteps on the stairs and along the corridor. We heard him pause at the door of the room above us, cross the threshold and take several steps forward, his heels sounding sharp on the bare floor. There was a second of silence and then came a most terrific, deadened blow, the force of which rattled the rotten casements and jarred the walls. This was followed, after another pause, by a scraping, dragging sound which made the flesh creep.

The men made for the door, and I was terribly moved myself; indeed, my throat contracted so that I could scarce swallow. But there was one thought that did not leave me for a moment I knew that the young mate had never been up there alone with that fiendish noise were it not for me.

"Men," I said, "I am going up there to see what this means, and if you are true men, you will follow me."

They were not cowards, for though it went sorely against the grain, they accompanied me up the stairs and along the corridor, but not one of them—not even the captain—would enter the room.

We called the mate by name, but he made no answer, and we stood shivering and wondering in the doorway, with the wind from the two broken windows, looking out on the sea, blowing strangely in our faces. I confess to

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having had a strong curiosity as to the cause of the strange noises; yet I vow that nothing but my anxiety about the mate would have induced me to enter the room.

As it was, I stepped into it, calling loudly; there was still no answer but the moan of the lulling winds, which suddenly caught the door behind me and slammed it violently between me and my companions. It was rather of a shock to me, in my frame of mind, and you may fancy how I felt, when I discovered that the door had a spring lock attached to it, and that I was shut in with I knew not what.

"Confound it, I'm locked in!" I cried. "Can't you men do something to open the door?"

We rattled the knob furiously on both sides until someone suggested breaking the door in, and then I suddenly heard them clattering and stumbling down the stairs; they all went together, there was not a man of them would have gone by himself for a fortune.

It is wonderful how fear for someone else will check fear for one's self. The mate was still on my mind, and I put behind me this trouble of my own and took a step forward with a desire to investigate. My foot slipped, and I came near falling. I stooped to find the cause, and felt that the floor was wet with a kind of slime. The touch of it was so disgusting that my gorge rose.

Feeling about to find whence it came, I discovered it to be a track like that of a colossal snail, which I followed on my hands and knees with a determination that I cannot account for. It brought me to the windows, where I became aware, in the darkness, of a darker mass directly before me, and as I was light-headed and reckless by this time, I put out my hand to touch it. The remembrance sickens me to this day; for I had put it into what seemed an enormous mouth, warm, wet and with teeth!

You may be sure that I withdrew my hand in less time than it takes to tell, and though I heard the men breaking down the door and calling my name, my mind was a perfect blank, except for the thought of the wet trail and that great mouth laughing at me in the darkness. If the object had moved I should have gone clean distracted at once. But it remained still, and at last the door fell in, and the captain ran forward, lighting the way with a blazing piece of wood.

Then I saw what my monster was, and some of the men swore and others prayed. It was the mate, with his throat cut almost clean through, with a trail of blood nearly to the door—and I had put my hand into the wound. He was lying on the floor with his feet on the window-seat.

"Heavens, this is no work of a spirit!" said the captain; and we all agreed that it was not.

Further investigation proved beyond a doubt that we had fallen upon a smuggler's retreat, for the room was filled with casks of rum and with boxes of various importations. The murderers had made a complete escape.

We found the men who had remained outside much excited; they had seen figures escaping from the windows and crawling down over the verandah, but their superstitious fears prevented them giving chase.

The peculiar position of the dead mate revealed that for same reason—probably that of keeping alive these convenient superstitions—the murderers had intended making off with the body, but found as they got out of the windows that it interfered with a hasty retreat.

I have never had the pleasure of seeing them hanged, but not long afterward a gang of contrabandists fell into the clutches of the law, for which I thanked Heaven.

I cannot express the satisfaction I felt in leaving behind me that blotched and drunken house with its ghosts of many crimes, sunning itself high and dry under the beautiful sky of the next morning. The verandah was covered with shells and pretty rippling patterns of sand; and though the sea still heaved roughly, it kept at a respectful distance.

I never again saw the captain after we parted; I heard, however, that it was not long before he was in possession of another schooner which did not leak. As for my papers, I was shocked to discover that I had left them on board when the ship foundered.

However, a merciful Providence has preserved our Government from harm and I was exonerated from all blame in connection with the loss. It has frequently come to me that those who opposed the measures adopted by the administration, had a hand in my making sail in a leaky vessel in order to break off the negotiations. I'll mention no names, but I have my suspicions.

ALFRED GRANT.

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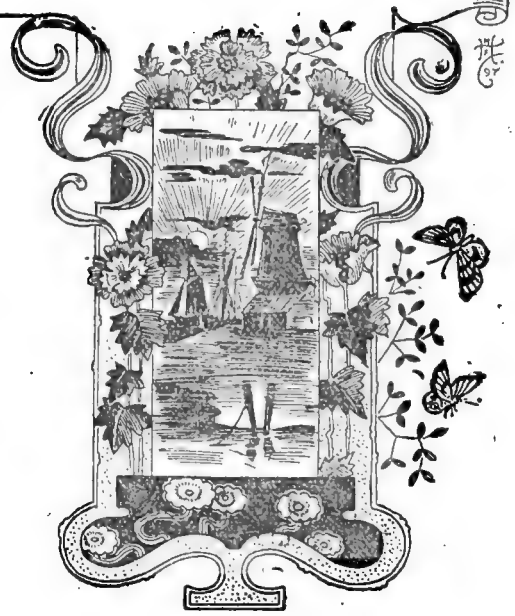

"I DON'T understand it at all, cap'n."

Howard said it emphatically.

He was a tall, lanky man, and he leant his elbow familiarly upon the pommel of the saddle as he talked with the young owner of the Walong River farm.

Henry Penryn, the proprietor, relied no little upon the judgment and experience of Howard, and the subject of their present discussion was a serious one.

"Come, now; stock doesn't disappear, even in the bush without human agency," Penryn said reflectively. "According to the books, more than 500 head have disappeared—totally evaporated, so to speak—since last reckoning. I don't know what will happen. The leakage must stop, or I shall have to give up the business."

"Looks like there were thieves at work, don't it?"

Penryn looked at him without reply. His silence evidently exasperated his man.

"Look here," he exclaimed. He used the butt end of his whip to draw in the red dirt of the trail the figure used in the Walong River farm as a brand, thus (——) a "lazy O" in their nomenclature.

With a horizontal stroke the C was converted into D.

"Sweet, pretty little trick, ain't it?" he said sarcastically.

"But how does he get 'em?" demanded Penryn; "that is, if he is the guilty party."

"Oh, he's guilty fast enough! I've seen many a man hung on less evidence in the old days."

They were speaking of M. Perriot, a young Frenchman who had been for a time dealing in sheep in their neighbourhood and was rapidly growing rich.

M. Perriot was a good-looking, besides being a wealthy, young Frenchman.

Penryn had met him several times—usually at Freemans station, which lay several miles from the Walong River farm.

Before M. Perriot had come into the country Penryn had been about the only young man visitor at the Freemans'.

The farmer's daughter, Josie, was the magnet which drew him. Nowadays he always found Perriot there before him.

That very afternoon Penryn, taking what he called his constitutional, saw before him the young lady with Perriot as her escort. They were well mounted, and his pony had all he could do to overtake the couple, and might not have done so but that they drew rein on the verge of a hill and sat contemplating what was going on below on the other slope, where Perriot had his little camp.

So interested were they in the sheep branding, that they did not notice Penryn till he was close upon them. After saluting Miss Freeman and exchanging a few grave words with Perriot, Penryn raised his hat again to the lady and trotted down the farther side of the hill.

As he went, however, he turned to Perriot, and said, as he pointed to the scene below them:

"I've heard of a man being hung for branding a lot of sheep like that. Times have changed, but it isn't a healthy occupation even now."

"What mean you?" spluttered Perriot.

But Miss Josie turned her back upon the Cornishman.

Penryn spurred his pony on and rode down into the midst of the rabble about the camp. The men saw him coming, and somebody recognised him. The branders huddled together and turned black looks upon him as he rode into their midst.

There was a sheep close to him with an old mark—a mark Penryn knew well.

The men gathered round the Englishman with threatening faces. He looked down upon them contemptuously.

"You know what this means," he said calmly. "This place will be too hot for you fellows—understand?"

He turned his pony about and rode out of the group. One man made a grab at his bridle rein, and Penryn raised his whip, and brought it down with stinging force across his face. Then he put spurs to his pony and rode off over the rise, expecting every instant to hear the report of guns behind him. But no volley followed him, and he passed over the crest of the rise unmolested. Miss Josie and her escort had disappeared.

"If the fool remains round her twenty-four hours, I

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won't answer for the consequences. There were sheep from runs other than mine in that lot."

He struck off for his own place in a different direction from that by which he had come. The country was wilder and more broken. There was a grove of stunted trees and a branch of the river in his path, and he stopped to give his pony an hour's rest.

He was still sitting by the side of the stream, his steed feeding a few yards away, when he saw a group of half a dozen or more horsemen on the other side of the brook. They forded the stream, and then, apparently catching sight of him, drew up in an excited, gesticulating group. Penryn was quick to recognise them as from Perriot's camp.

He sprang up, intending to get his horse and be prepared for whatever was to follow, but as he loosened the revolver in his belt he heard a hail behind him. Instantly the group of horsemen spurred up the incline towards him; but before he could turn round to see what new danger threatened him from the rear, four men sprang upon him from the bush.

Some of his enemies had made a flank movement and he was at their mercy. He was dragged to the ground, the chattering crowd at once surrounded and disarmed him, and he was bound with his own belt to a lightning riven stump on the edge of the grove.

Penryn believed his condition to be desperate indeed, but he would not show fear before his captors and laughed in their faces. At that, one—the fellow whom he had struck at the camp—lashed him twice across the cheek with his own whip, and the blood flowed from the gashes.

But even the pain of the wound did not cow him.

"Do you think you can kill me and go scot free?" he demanded. "You'll find your mistake. My boys will hunt you all over the colony. And all Perriot's money won't save you."

At that they drew aside to confer, while Penryn leant against the tree to which they had bound him, half fainting from loss of blood and the pain of the gashes on his face. He remembered with bitterness how Freeman's daughter had turned her back upon him when he accused Perriot of stealing his sheep.

The girl was evidently in love with the Frenchman, and in his despair the young Cornishman did not much care what these desperadoes did with him.

Suddenly his enemies ran for their horses and climbed helter-skelter into their saddles. Penryn, with his head hanging upon his breast, paid slight attention, but when the swift beat of horses' hoofs smote his ear he wondered vaguely if more of Perriot's men were coming.

He raised his head.

The men were crossing the stream again, plying spur and lash as they went. One of them, the man who had already struck him, turned in his saddle and fired at the figure tied to the tree, but the bullet flew wide of its mark.

The pounding of hoofs increased, and pouring over a neighbouring rise came another body of men.

Penryn looked again and recognised Howard at their head. He cried aloud to him and then hung limp upon his bonds.

He came to himself again in a moment.

Howard had him lying upon the grass, and he found himself choking over some of "the real stuff," which the man had forced between his lips.

"We were just in time, by Heaven!" exclaimed Howard. "How d'you feel now?"

"Better," said Penryn, sitting up.

"Here, lemme bind that up," said the man, muffling the lower part of his employer's face in a linen handkerchief. "Them fellers had better get off as fast as they can," he pursued. "The boys are hot after 'em an' the whole place will be buzzin' about their ears afore mornin'."

"How did you know about it?" asked Penryn.

"Freeman's gal rid over an' told me how you was down in Perriot's camp. Plucky gal she is! nearly rid her hoss to death bringing th' news. Hey, where yer goin'?" he broke off to ask, as Penryn staggered to his feet and made for his horse.

"Don't suppose I'm going to stay here all night, do you?" demanded his employer, testily.

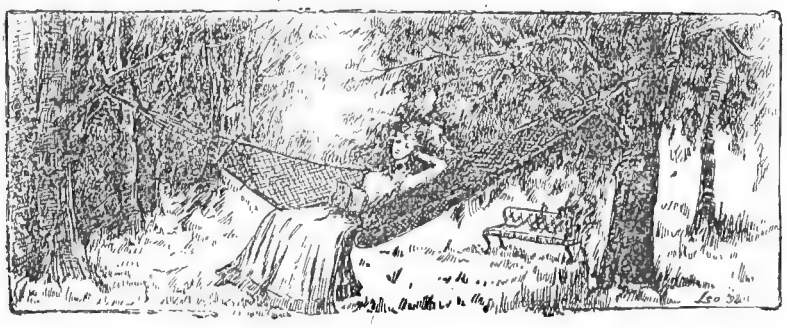
"S'pose not. You'd better go home. I'm goin' to ride on arter the boys."

"All right. I'll go home," said Penryn, but he started his horse at a canter in an entirely different direction.

Howard tightened his saddle girth before he remounted, chuckling the while. "He'll get there 'fore the gal does if he keeps up that gait," he said. "Expec' she'll be wearin' the 'lazy O' brand 'fore long an' Walong River farm 'll be gettin' a mistress."

Then he vaulted into his saddle and rode off.

MAT GOUGH.



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ONE HUNDRED POUNDS REWARD.

Two passengers left the train at Barton one pleasant afternoon in May. One was a tall, slender young man, with a pleasant face, frank blue eyes, and fair hair and moustache; the other, a young girl, dressed very plainly in grey serge, and wearing a thick brown veil which entirely concealed her face.

Her figure was so graceful, and showed to such admirable advantage in the close-fitting dress, that the young man looked at her with very evident admiration in his eyes as he passed her on his way to the steps.

His look was not returned. The girl's eyes were riveted on a large placard which was tacked up on the door of the waiting-room, announcing that £100 reward was offered for the apprehension of the murderer of one Rachel Taylor, on April 23rd. All communications were to be addressed to Holmes and Clifford, solicitors.

"It does not seem possible!" muttered the girl. "My old friend, poor soul! What a sad end to her strange, lonely life!"

Then she turned as the station-master came near, and asked him if he could direct her to the house of Mr. Derwent.

"It's 'bout a mile from here," he answered, "perhaps a little more. Keep on up the road till you come to a lane on your right. Turn down that, an' Derwent's is the first house you come to. Are you goin' to stop there?" he asked, with the curiosity which a monotonous country life is apt to engender.

"Yes; I am Mr. Derwent's niece," answered the girl, quietly, "and if you can manage to have my luggage sent up to Mr. Derwent's, I shall be very much obliged."

He promised that the luggage should follow her almost immediately, and Hester Derwent left the station and took the road he had indicated as leading to her uncle's house.

A situation more lonely than that of her future home could scarcely be imagined. The house stood a long distance from the road, and was completely surrounded by trees and shrubs. It was a low, six-roomed cottage with a slanting roof and small dormer windows.

About the whole place there was a look of such ruin and decay, that Hester's heart sank within her as she unlatched the gate and walked up the weed-grown path.

She had known very little of her uncle, and had not seen him for eight years; but she had imagined him such a man as her dear father had been, and was entirely unprepared to find him living in such a desolate abode.

The young girl's knock on the worm-eaten door was answered, when her patience was almost at an end, by an old wizened-faced woman, who appeared to find it extremely difficult to comprehend that the handsome young lady on the steps was her master's niece.

But she consented to admit her, and after directing her to knock on the door of a room to the right, hobbled away into the kitchen again to resume her culinary operations.

"Come in," said a clear, manly voice, as Hester knocked timidly, and she pushed open the door and found herself face to face with the young man she had seen at the station.

"I was told that Mr. Derwent——" she began.

"Mr. Derwent went upstairs a moment ago," interrupted the young man, kindly, seeing her hesitation and changing colour. "He will be back very soon. Won't you sit down? Let me introduce myself. My name is Wilfred Clifford, and——"

"Wilfred Clifford!" interrupted Hester. "And you don't know me? You don't remember Hester Derwent?"

"Is it possible!" exclaimed Wilfred, seizing both her hands in a warm grasp. "And why are you here? I thought you were at school still."

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"I have been in a boarding-school for eight years," said Hester. "Uncle sent me there when father died. Scarlet fever broke out in the school, and all those who could leave left at once. I did not take time even to telegraph to uncle. I knew that he was keeping house here, and that my coming a few weeks sooner than he expected would probably make no difference to him. But I did not think to find him in such a place as this."

"Certainly it is not a proper home for you, Hester," said Wilfred, tenderly. "Such ruin and decay may suit your poor old uncle, but you deserve something different."

"I must make the best of it since I have no other relative in the world," said Hester. "I will try to lighten the gloom. Do you remember what a lovely home we had, Wilfred? And to think your poor aunt should have met such a terrible death! I knew nothing about it until I saw the placard at the station."

"It was a brutal murder," said Wilfred, his handsome face darkening perceptibly. "You know she would never trust her money and valuables in the bank. She thought them safer in her own care, and hid them away where she imagined no one would ever discover them. She once showed me a box nearly full of rings, bracelets, stones of great value, and heavy gold chains. Most of them were heirlooms in her family, and had descended to her from many generations. But she never told me where she kept them, and I never asked.

"I often tried to convince her that they would be safer in the bank; but she would not listen to me.

"She was found on the floor of her bedroom, with her head almost severed from her body. In her desk was her will, in which she left all her property to me, and a letter in which she told me that there was a false floor to the closet in her room, and on lifting that up I should find the box containing the jewels and a canvas bag full of gold pieces. Of course, neither box nor bag was to be found, and, with the exception of the house and ground, I am as poor as ever."

"Has no clue been discovered yet?" asked Hester.

"None whatever. The matter is shrouded in the deepest mystery. But my partner, Albert Holmes, is working like a tiger in the case. He is as shrewd and sharp a fellow as I ever met, and I have faith that he will unearth the villains yet. It was so unfortunate that he was not at home on the night of the murder."

At this moment the door opened to admit Mr. Derwent, an old man, with stooping shoulders, an uncertain gait, and long white hair, which hung over his coat-collar. So much greyer, older and weaker did he look than when Hester had seen him last, that she scarcely recognised him.

He seemed greatly surprised to see her, and it appeared to Hester, who was exceedingly sensitive, that he was annoyed and a little distressed by her arrival.

He said very little, however, but, turning to Clifford, gave him a small package, directing him to give it to Mr. Holmes as soon as possible.

"I suppose you would not care to remain all night?" he added.

"I must not even think of it," said Wilfred, "much as I would enjoy talking over old times with Hester. But at any time Holmes may discover some clue to the murderers, and I must be on hand to consult with him if necessary. I should not have left town to-day for even the few hours that it takes to make a trip here, but Holmes could not possibly get off, as he had a case in court, and he wouldn't trust his letter to you by post. He seemed anxious to have it put into your hands without delay, so I offered to run down with it."

It seemed to Hester as if a peculiar expression, ironical and a little sad, rested on her uncle's face as Wilfred spoke, but it was gone in an instant, and he shook hands cordially with his visitor as he bade him good-bye.

"I will come down again, Hester," the young man said in parting from her, "and try not to feel lonely."

But as time passed Hester grew very lonely indeed. From morning to night she was thrown on her own resources for amusement and occupation. Her uncle appeared only at meals. All day long he remained shut up in a little room he called his study, though Hester could not imagine what he found to employ him there; for the room contained no books, and was furnished with only a small, deep desk, a table, and three chairs.

Wilfred Clifford kept his promise, and came occasionally to see Hester, and she looked forward to his visit as a traveller in the desert looks forward to reaching the water which will give new life to his frame. But it seemed to the poor girl as if her uncle was annoyed by Wilfred's coming, and more than once he refused to see him at all, so that her joy in the presence of her old friend was not unmixed with pain.

She saw very plainly that Wilfred was learning to love her, and she knew that he was becoming dearer to her every day; and she dreaded the coming of the time when her uncle must learn this, so sure was she that he would refuse his consent to her marriage.

She had been several weeks at the cottage before she saw Mr. Holmes. One morning her uncle announced that the lawyer would be with them that evening, and that dinner must be put off until the arrival of the late train.

"As he comes to see me entirely on businses, you need not feel obliged to remain with us," said the old man. "He is good enough to come to me, instead of requiring me to go to him. We shall be occupied in the study until late, looking over—some—papers, and you'd better go to bed early, my dear."

"Yes, uncle," said Hester, quietly.

"It may be that I shall have to go abroad for a time," continued the old man, a little hesitatingly. "But it is not certain. Holmes will decide for me to-night: so you need not worry yet, Hester."

"I did not know that your business ever took you abroad, uncle," said Hester. "But I think the trip would benefit your health. You don't look well, and every night I hear you moaning in your sleep. Last night you screamed aloud several times. It really frightened me. Don't you think you ought to see a doctor, uncle?"

"No, no," said the old man, rising from his

seat and moving towards the door. "I'm not ill, Hester—I'm only tired; and sometimes I have the nightmare."

He left the room, and Hester, wondering at his strange, nervous manner, resumed her occupation of clearing the breakfast table, which she had ceased in order to more closely observe her uncle.

She was in her room when Mr. Holmes arrived, and overheard his greeting to her uncle, who opened the hall door to admit him.

"So you expected me? You received my note, then? I think we can push matters now without any trouble."

"Hush!" said Mr. Derwent, tremulously. "My niece may hear you."

"Why the deuce do you have a niece, I'd like to know?" said Holmes, as he entered.

Hester wondered what kind of a man Wilfred's partner could be to talk so roughly to an old man and she was predisposed to dislike him.

But she speedily forgot her half-formed prejudice when she met him an hour later at the dinner table. His appearance was prepossessing.

He was a handsome man, with keen, dark eyes, an olive complexion, regular features, and a long, black moustache, which he habitually caressed as he talked.

Though dignified in manner, he was as gracious as possible with Hester, who was young enough to be considerably flattered by the notice he took of her, and the delicate compliments he contrived to pay her before the meal was over.

As they rose from the table he took her hand and gave it an unmistakable pressure, saying that, as he should probably not see her again, he would wish her good-bye.

"I sometimes think your uncle is a little—peculiar," said Holmes, hesitating over the last word, as Derwent left the room.

"I often wonder if Miss Taylor's death had anything to do with the singular change which has come over him since I last saw him," said Hester. "They were great friends when we all lived in that part, and I know he thought very seriously once of marrying her. I remember hearing my father speak of it, and say that the old lady was more than willing. Was not her death horrible? But has no clue to the murderers been found?"

"Not yet," said Holmes. "And still—may I tell you something in confidence? I think, perhaps, you ought to know it."

"Please tell me," said Hester. "If it is anything about the murder, I shall certainly take a deep interest in it. When Mr. Clifford is here we talk of very little else."

"Ah!" with a peculiar look which made the blood rush to her cheeks. "I fancy I could find other objects of interest. And, if what I suspect has any foundation, Clifford ought to avoid the subject of his aunt's death."

"What do you mean?" asked Hester, turning pale at his significant tone,

"Only that Wilfred Clifford was tired of waiting for his old aunt's money; that he, of all people, ought to have known—had a better chance to know—where the property was secreted, and——"

"Stop!" interrupted Hester, trembling. "I will not listen to any more. You wrong him by your suspicions. They are unfounded. He was away—that can be proved."

"Perhaps so," said Holmes, with a shrug of his shoulders. "I hope so, certainly. I am sorry I gave you even a hint of my suspicions. I had no idea, of course, that you would resent my confidence." And with a smile and a bow he left the room.

Hester went to her room and tried to think matters over calmly. She would not admit to herself that she was at all influenced by what Holmes had said of Wilfred, but, nevertheless, she was vaguely troubled and distressed.

The night was close and warm, and thinking that in her present condition of mind sleep would be impossible, she concluded to go down into the garden.

She descended the stairs as noiselessly as possible, so as not to disturb her uncle or Mr. Holmes, whose voice she could hear as she passed the study door, and gaining the garden, she sank down in the first seat she saw—a rustic bench under a cedar tree.

She was about to abandon herself to the quiet beauty of the night, and the fragrance of the flowers blooming about her, when she was startled by hearing a voice say:—

"Well, now that matter is settled, the sooner we go to work the better."

"I wish you could arrange to go," replied a voice that Hester recognised as her uncle's. "You always put the worst part on me."

"Do I?" with a sneer. "I scarcely think you took on your shoulders the worst part of that business we entered on last April."

"There's a great deal of risk in going——" began Mr. Derwent.

"Oh, drop the subject. You've got to go, and that ends it. I have explained my reasons until I am tired. Are you sure that niece of yours is in her room?"

"Oh, yes; I heard the clock strike eleven a few moments ago. She is always in bed by ten at the latest."

"We don't want any surprises. Where's the old woman?"

"She went home to stay all night."

"Good. Where's the key to the desk?"

At this juncture Hester turned round and found that she was sitting within two yards of the open window of the study, the shutters of which were closed, however. She did not rise, but remained motionless, half paralysed by what she had heard.

What could be this business upon which they were engaged, and which would be ruined by a surprise?

Turning the matter over in her mind, Hester at last determined to penetrate the mystery. It was not curiosity which urged her to decide thus. She was singularly free from any desire to possess herself unbidden of the secrets of others.

No, it was a feeling; which she could not smother, that something was going wrong in that room which merited detection.

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For her own sake, she must know whether her uncle could be trusted with her welfare.

Softly she advanced to the window, and trembling in every limb, peered through a crack in the shutter. What a sight met her eyes!

As she looked she could scarcely repress a cry of astonishment.

On the table in the centre of the room lay a glittering heap of jewellery. Massive old silver, some of the pieces encrusted with precious gems; gold chains; rings; costly bracelets; sets of valuable stones; and a necklace, tiara, cross, and pin of diamonds.

A fortune was spread on that little table, a fortune which Hester felt sure did not belong to the two men in whose possession she saw it now.

With small instruments, both Derwent and Holmes were busily separating the diamonds and stones from their settings, and then pushing them into little heaps as they fell on the table.

To whom did this fortune belong?

Hester had little difficulty in determining this question.

A small canvas bag and a square, black box on the floor by the lawyer's chair gave her an unmistakable clue. She felt sure that she saw before her the murderers of Wilfred's aunt. And yet one of these men was her uncle—her father's brother—into whose care she had been committed eight years before!

What was her duty? What steps must she take, now that she had made this terrible discovery?

She stood at the window until the work within the room was completed. She saw Holmes fill a belt with stones and fasten it about her uncle's waist. She saw him take from a similar belt about his own body a handful of gold, which he gave to Mr. Derwent. She knew now why her uncle was going abroad. It was to dispose in perfect safety of the ill-gotten booty.

It was daylight when at length she sought her room again. But, though she undressed and lay down, she could not sleep. That was impossible with such a load on heart and brain.

She descended to breakfast, looking wan, pale, and haggard. She had not decided what course to pursue. She recoiled from the thought of exposing her uncle; but could she, in justice to either the living or the dead, remain silent?

Holmes had left early in order to catch the first train; she was spared the trial of meeting him again. But she found it impossible to preserve her composure, even before her uncle, who eyed her very sharply as she sat listlessly behind the coffee urn, but who made no comment on her want of appetite.

As they rose from the table Hester formed a sudden resolution. She found a longer silence unendurable. Approaching her uncle, she laid her hand on his arm.

"Uncle," she said, "last night I saw you in your study, and saw the work upon which you were engaged. How could you stain your hands with the blood of your old friend?"

Her voice was solemn and impressive, and as she spoke Henry Derwent turned fairly livid.

He staggered back against the wall like a man struck by a sudden blow.

"I did not do it—I never touched her," he gasped. "I was outside all the time. It was Holmes. I never knew she was murdered until I saw it in the papers. He did not tell me. He kept it from me as long as he could. Hester, I swear to you, I thought it was only a robbery at first. But I knew it would come to light. I told Holmes that Clifford would find out some day."

His voice had risen to a shriek. He was trembling like a leaf in a storm.

"Why did you take the money and jewels, uncle? Why help to defraud the innocent?" asked Hester sternly.

"He—he made me," gasped the old man. "He had a hold over me. I couldn't help it."

He dropped into a chair, and, entirely overcome, let his head fall on his breast and burst into tears.

"But this property must be restored, uncle. It must be given to Wilfred Clifford. You must not keep it another hour."

"You won't betray me?" shrieked the old man, falling on his knees before her, and clutching her dress with both hands. "Oh, Hester, spare me, spare me! Remember that your father was my brother. Don't betray me!"

"If I only knew what was right!" sighed Hester, as she helped him to his feet.

He did not answer; but she saw his face become suddenly distorted, his trembling increase. The next moment he fell in a fit at her feet.

Half an hour later the village doctor arrived breathless, at the cottage, having been summoned in hot haste by the old servant. But his skill availed nothing. He found no use for the medicine box he had brought; for within ten minutes of his arrival old Derwent breathed his last.

* * * * *

Late that evening, as Wilfred Clifford sat alone in the small parlour of the neat little house which his aunt had left him, he heard the sound of steps on the gravel walk. He answered the ring of the bell himself, and to his great surprise saw that his visitor was a woman. He did not recognise her until she came into the lighted hall and threw back her veil.

"Hester!" he exclaimed.

"Yes, it is I," she said, in a low voice. "Strange, is it not, that I should come alone to your house late at night? But I have come to tell you where you can find the murderer you have been seeking so long."

The next morning, Holmes was startled by a heavy knock at his door. He opened it, and was confronted by two policemen, who held a warrant for his arrest for the wilful murder of Rachel Taylor.

The evidence was against him, and he was convicted, paying the penalty of his crime a few days later.

Wilfred Clifford and Hester Derwent were married a short time afterwards, and it is scarcely necessary to say that the bride never returned to that desolate cottage where she had made such a terrible and important discovery. Nor did she ever claim the reward. Love paid the debt, and her heart was more than satisfied.

ALLAN DEED.

OUGHT YOU TO HAVE HAD ONE OF THOSE FIVE POUNDS?

THE result of the distribution in connection with the ten £5 notes offered every week in *P.W.* appears in the current issue of that paper. Three out of the ten people selected have been fortunate enough to secure £5 each by forwarding their names to this office. There are seven others, who, by failing to apply, either through indifference, or through their not being readers, did not secure their money. Their names and addresses are also given. Are you one of them?

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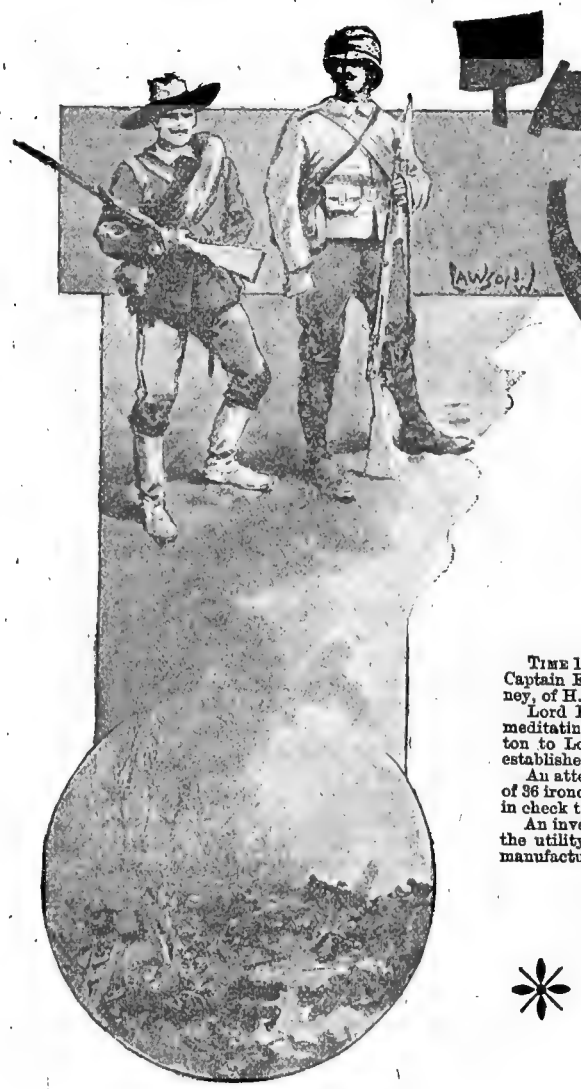
Begin this Magnificent Serial To-day.



THE FINAL WAR

BY

LOUIS TRACY.

Author of "The Shadow Hand," "An American Emperor," "The Lost Provinces," etc.

SUMMARY.

Time 1898. Irene, daughter of Lord Eskdale, Ambassador at Paris, is engaged to Captain Edward Harington, Lord Eskdale's military *attaché*, and Lieutenant Rodney, of H.M.S. *Magnificent*, to Harington's sister, Ethel.

Lord Eskdale has very good reasons to believe that France and Germany are meditating an immediate invasion of England. He, therefore, dispatches Harington to London to warn the Premier, and Rodney to warn the British admiral established in the Mediterranean.

An attempt to land at Worthing is made by a combined French and German fleet of 36 ironclads, 40 troopships, and 100 smaller boats. The local volunteers hold them in check till the regulars arrive from London.

An inventor secures an audience with the Prince of Wales and demonstrates to him the utility of a new weapon, with the result that steps are immediately taken to manufacture an enormous number of them.

CHAPTER VII.

The Voyage of the "Hornet."

From the course of events it has been made clear that Lieutenant Rodney accomplished, without hitch or deviation of any sort, the chief part of the special mission upon which he was so suddenly dispatched by Lord Eskdale.

It was not until a fellow-countryman entered the mail train at Bologna, late on the Wednesday evening, that Rodney learnt the full significance of his journey. The Italian newspapers were selling in hundreds in the station, and a chance inquiry made by the new arrival elicited the fact that war had been declared and the allied fleets were then on their way to the English coast. The Englishman who gave this information was himself intent upon catching the *Peninsular* at Brindisi in the hope that he might be able to get home by that means, as the possibility of crossing the Continent by train was practically out of the question.

The *Peninsular* was true to her appointed time. Rodney had little leisure to make some purchases to complete his scanty outfit before he stepped from the marble quay to the deck of that fine steamer. A brief conversation with the captain led him to give some emphatic orders to the chief engineer, and when the *Peninsular* swung out of the little harbour, with its quaint windmill-shaped castle guarding the entrance, the log forthwith recorded a speed of seventeen knots per hour. There would be no bonus for officers or engineers for that voyage owing to the economy of coal consumption.

On Friday morning at six o'clock Valetta was reached, and when the *Peninsular's* anchor rattled from her bows, Midshipman Fisher, of the *Hornet*, swung himself on board from a steam launch and inquired for Rodney.

"Sir Arthur Fremantle is waiting for you at the castle, sir," he said, saluting, as Frank had hastened towards the youngster when he saw him climbing up the ship's side. "He is anxious to see you immediately."

"Tumble my traps overboard, and I will be with you in half a tick," was the answer, and Rodney hastened off to bid the Captain "good-bye," in case circumstances should prevent him from rejoining the *Peninsular*, as the ship left again in two hours.

The next time he set foot on the vessel's deck, Ethel and he were *en route* to Egypt for their honeymoon tour.

"What's the news here?" he inquired as he took his

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place by the middy's side in the stern-sheets of the little launch which rapidly throbbed its way to the steps of St. John.

"We've all got the jumps," was the answer. "The fleet left yesterday morning at half an hour's notice, bound for Gib., we believe. At twelve o'clock every blessed cable was cut somewhere or another, and since then we have been drinking pegs and asking each other 'What's up?' There are 8,000 troops here and 1,000 militia, and every man jack is a complete note of interrogation in himself."

"We are at war with France and Germany," said Rodney. The boatswain heard the reply, and, as discipline forbade him to yell, or curse, or even whistle, he pressed the throttle-valve hard down and made the launch hum with excitement.

"Then what in thunder was the *Hornet* left here for?" asked Midshipman Fisher, scarlet with indignation at the thought that there was a row going on and he was not in it.

The *Hornet*, it may be explained, is a diminutive torpedo-boat destroyer, very smart and very small, so there was no wonder that Rodney laughed as he answered: "All right, young 'un. Don't be alarmed. You'll see sparks before this business is over."

There was no time for further conversation. When the launch reached the landing place, Rodney was met by the Assistant Military Secretary, Captain J. S. Ewart, of the Cameron Highlanders, and taken straight to the Governor's quarters.

Sir Arthur Lyon Fremantle received his momentous intelligence with an air of deeper concern than Master Fisher had displayed.

"Seymour and I feared as much when your telegrams reached us," he said. "The word you used meant that we were to be prepared for the worst possible eventualities in the way of a hostile combination, and both Admiralty and War Office have repeatedly urged the necessity for momentary readiness for action. Have you heard that six French warships passed south of the island this morning at 5.30, steaming rapidly eastwards?"

"No, sir. I have only been on shore five minutes."

"I thought that perhaps it might be known to the people on the launch. We are secure enough here," went on the Governor, "but I wish we could do something more than act on the defensive only."

"Where were the enemy going, in your opinion, sir?" said Rodney.

"To seize the Suez Canal, undoubtedly, and to capture all the British merchant ships they may encounter. It is fortunate that they cannot fall in with the *Peninsular*, which may now escape. I suppose they will also occupy Perim, for the sake of the coal supply, and probably bombard Aden. By the manner in which they have telegraphically isolated us, I have no doubt that the garrisons of both places will be in ignorance of the progress of events until the enemy's fleet commences hostilities."

"Why should they not be stopped?" cried the naval officer, starting up excitedly from his chair.

"Stopped! What can we do?" exclaimed the Governor.

"Blow up the canal!" was the emphatic rejoinder.

"We can't blow it up by talking about it," remarked Captain Ewart.

"No. But the *Hornet* is here, and if she is ready for sea she can get to Port Said before the enemy's fleet," said Rodney, now thoroughly excited.

"She is in first-rate trim," said the Governor. "Sir Michael Seymour told me so himself, and he left her here to act as a dispatch vessel if necessary. Unfortunately her commander, Lieutenant Cator, has been very ill from island fever, and is still extremely weak."

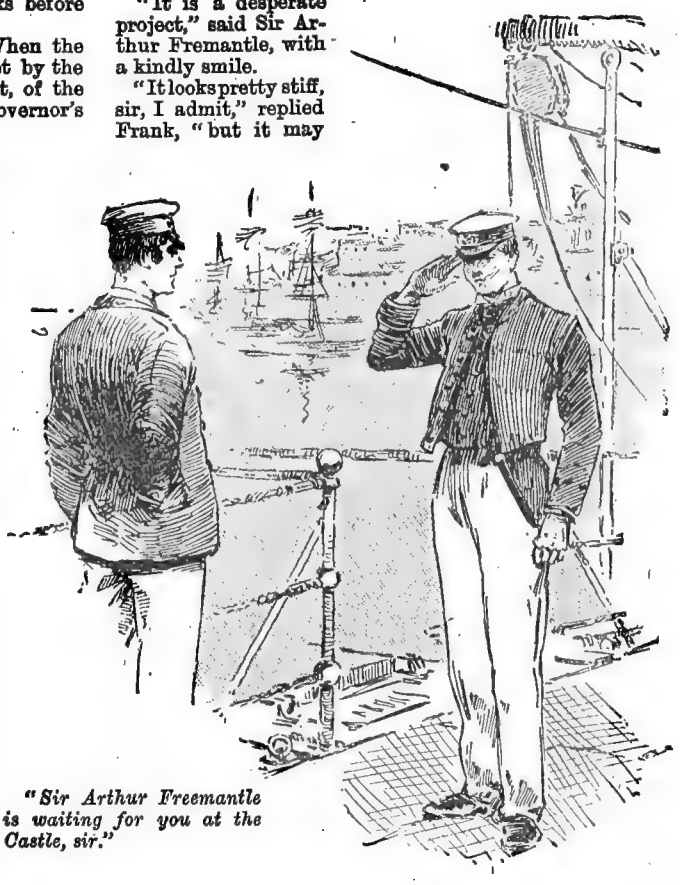
"Send me, sir," cried Rodney. "You can forward a note to the Admiral by the *Peninsular* to explain my absence and your intentions."

"Lieutenant Rodney," said the Governor, cordially extending his hand, "you are a man of action. Go, and take my heartfelt thanks for your offer, which I gratefully accept. I leave all details to you, and Captain Ewart will take you to the Admiral Superintendent so that all the resources of the dockyard may be placed at your disposal. It has always been the intention of the authorities to convert the Mediterranean into a French lake in the event of a war with France, and I see no harm in allowing Germany and Russia to share the privilege with her. I will communicate, as you suggest, with Sir Michael Culme Seymour, and I wish you good luck. Have you any plan? If successful, do you return here?"

"I think, sir, it would be best to dash through the Red Sea and warn Aden. Perhaps the cable to Bombay may be uninjured, and we could thus give India timely information."

"It is a desperate project," said Sir Arthur Fremantle, with a kindly smile.

"It looks pretty stiff, sir, I admit," replied Frank, "but it may be easy enough. Will you let me write a line to be forwarded with yours?"



"Sir Arthur Freemantle is waiting for you at the Castle, sir."

He hastily scribbled a note to Ethel, which ran as follows:

Malta, May 5, 1898.

DEAREST,—If you hear that the Suez Canal is blown up, you may feel certain that I am all serene. See my mother and kiss her for me. I am skipper of the *Hornet* for the next week.

Yours ever,
FRANK RODNEY.

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Before noon the *Hornet* was ready for sea, presenting a strange sight for such a trim little ship, as her decks were pile t high with bags of coal to eke out her ordinary supply of fuel. Rodney was seeing to the careful disposition of several hundredweight of dynamite when a scrap of paper was brought to him by a hospital orderly, which bore in faintly-pencilled scrawl this message:

I have heard of your project. I know I can't be in command, but for God's sake take me with you. I will be as fit as a fiddle in a few days. Don't leave me here, there's a good fellow. Your old messmate,

Gerald Cator.

"Where is Lieutenant Cator?" said Rodney to Master Fisher, who had grown an inch in height and girth since the morning.

"In the hospital, near the Gunners' Mess, sir."

"Take three men and bring him on board in five minutes, if you can."

"*If* I can!" said the middy, as he ran off. "As if I bloomin' well *couldn't!*"

Shortly afterwards a pale and emaciated figure in the undress uniform of a naval officer, reclining on a long deck chair, with three tars and a midshipman shouldering a corner a-piece, was borne at the double out of the hospital and rapidly ferried on board the *Hornet*. That afternoon the Senior Surgeon reported Lieutenant Cator for being absent without leave, but, after a chat with the Governor, cancelled the report, and marked the register opposite his name; "Discharged cured."

As the *Hornet* steamed down the magnificent harbour, the quays of Valetta itself and the "Three Cities" were crowded with cheering soldiers and port operatives, whilst a salute of seven guns was fired from one of the forts, compliments that the little vessel shrilly returned by means of her steam whistle. Quickly gaining way, she rattled off to the east at twenty knots an hour, and, after fixing a temporary crow's-nest for a look-out on top of an improvised foremast, Rodney went below to have a quiet chat with Cator, his brother officer and old-time chum when they were cadets together on board the *Britannia*.

At six bells in the middle watch, in other words, at 3 a.m. on Saturday, whilst the *Hornet* was spinning away under her forced draught of 3,300 horse power, her speed being then close on twenty-five knots an hour, the look-out sighted the French fleet, which was visible through the hazy light of dawn about four miles away on the port bow.

Rodney, who was asleep, turned out instantly, and climbed to the crow's nest, whence he could plainly distinguish the six vessels, two armoured battleships and four first-class cruisers, travelling leisurely at about half the pace of the *Hornet*, in the direction of Port Said.

His first impulse, on descending to the deck, was to alter his course so as to be safe from recognition by the time daylight was sufficiently advanced to render the horizon perfectly clear. But the boyish spirit was not quite dead in him yet, and, after a brief consultation with Cator, he resolved to reduce speed a little without deviation of bearings, with the result that in another hour's time he would be slightly ahead of the enemy and plainly visible to them.

Midshipman Fisher, of course, thought they were going to attack, and asked Rodney when it would be necessary to rouse the starboard watch, and whether someone should not be set to clear the torpedo tubes.

The commander did not perceive his meaning for a moment, but when he did, told him to confine his attention to procuring the biggest Union Jack that the ship's stores would produce.

They had not long to wait before signals made on the French fleet showed that they were observed, and a cruiser detached herself from the rest in order to intercept them. It was absolutely out of the question for a sixteen-knot vessel to endeavour to catch the *Hornet*, but by way of amusing the Frenchmen Rodney now displayed his bit of bunting, and young Fisher gained some renown by suggesting that it would be a delicate compliment to string up the French flag beneath it, he having fashioned a tricolour by means of a pair of scissors and some string, after rummaging in the signal locker.

A couple of shots were fired at them, and the second shell fell unpleasantly close. Rodney now thought the joke had gone far enough, as he could not afford to risk his ship for the sake of amusement. He therefore altered his course, and gave the order "Full speed ahead," with the result that by breakfast time the enemy was hull down on the horizon, nursing the uneasy conviction that the British vessel was up to some devilment that could not be fathomed.

By the afternoon of Sunday the *Hornet* was within sixty miles of Port Said. Her deck was now clear of coal-bags, and some inroad had been made upon her bunkers. She had made a superb run—over 1,000 miles in little more than two days—and Rodney decided to steam boldly into the Canal by daylight, and trust to luck in dealing with any enemy he might encounter there.

He reached the dirty but picturesque port by five o'clock, and demanded the right of one of Her Majesty's ships to take precedence of all other vessels waiting to enter the Canal.

The French officials hardly knew what to say, being conscious that war had broken out, but they thought it best to simply treat the passage of the *Hornet* as an ordinary event, and forthwith supplied her with the huge electric lamp that enables vessels to make their way through the Canal by night. During the delay Rodney ascertained from the captain of a British ship in the harbour that the Canal was clear of warships, so far as he knew, and in return for the information the naval officer advised him to set his course round by the north of Candia if he wished to save his ship from destruction by the French fleet.

Rodney determined to destroy the Canal at a point between Ferdeneh and El Gisr, where the banks are fairly high. Once inside, therefore, he pushed ahead at a much more rapid rate than the stately pace prescribed by the regulations, and put an end to the expostulations of the French pilot by having him securely lashed to a chair in the mess-room.

By midnight he had reached the spot selected. Every preliminary had been thought of during the journey from Malta. No sooner was the vessel tied up by the Canal side than the whole available crew set to work to bore blasting holes along the banks for a distance of two hundred yards on each shore.

For many hours they worked undisturbed. Two ships passed during the night, and, as they approached, the working parties temporarily returned to the *Hornet* to escape observation, and to be ready to use guns or torpedo against a possible foe. But the two passers-by were an English collier bound for Aden and an Austrian Lloyd steamer from India.

At last all preparations were made.

Twelve bore-holes had been driven into the banks to a vertical depth of ten feet, and several pounds of dynamite or blasting powder deposited at the bottom of each. Time fuses were affixed to the powder charges, and detonators, governed by long pieces of cord, controlled the dynamite.

When all was ready Rodney himself ignited each of the five-minute fuses, and saw that the men in charge of the dynamite sections were stationed, cord in hand, at the safest distance obtainable under the circumstances. Their instructions were to rapidly jerk the cord the moment that the first gunpowder explosion occurred and then run for their lives towards the desert, in order to escape falling stones and débris.

At the final moment the service telegraph wire of the Canal was cut as a precautionary measure, and then everyone waited anxiously for the *dénouement*.

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A loud roar announced the firing of the first time-fuse mine. Almost simultaneously there came a tremendous explosion from the dynamite charges. With a crash that seemed to shake the sky and loosen the firm earth, the terrific explosive tore thousands of tons of soil and rock from the solid banks of the canal. In a second a great cloud of smoke and dust rose into the air and spread around in impenetrable density, whilst a big wave raced along the Canal and made itself felt for many miles north and south along its length.

Two or three minor explosions followed, from the remainder of the powder mines, and when at last it was safe to make an inspection, Rodney found that the Canal was blocked in such fashion that it would require months of labour to make it passable for vessels.

He collected his ship's company, and there were no casualties, though Midshipman Fisher had been sharply rapped on the head by a falling pebble. The *Hornet* was about to proceed upon her way when a big steamer loomed out of the gloom and hailed the torpedo-boat.

"What ship is that?" said Rodney in response.

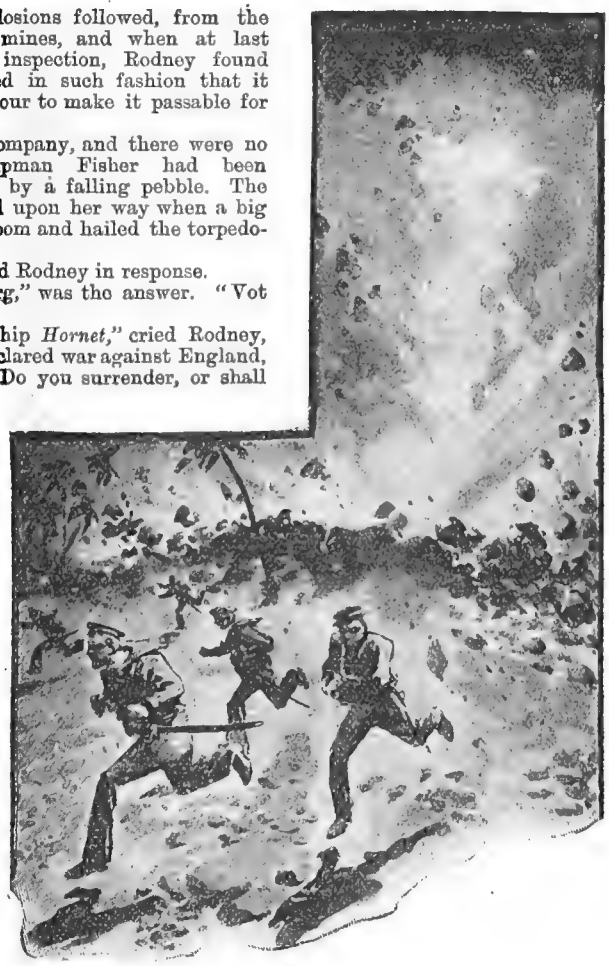
"Ze *Gretchen*, off Hamburg," was the answer. "Vot noise vos dat?"

"This is Her Majesty's ship *Hornet*," cried Rodney, "and as your country has declared war against England, we make you a prisoner. Do you surrender, or shall we torpedo you?"

"No, mein Gott, no torpedo," roared the astounded German captain.

Rodney then boarded the stranger, and told the commander that he and his crew might land their personal belongings, but as for the ship she would be run into the wreck of the Canal, and then scuttled, as an additional obstacle, and the German had no option but to submit to this rough usage.

After the British vessel had replenished her coal supply from the tramp's stores, the other part of the programme was faithfully carried out and the *Hornet* steamed off to Ismailia and Suez to report that a German steamer had burst her boilers and sunk in the Canal, temporarily damaging the telegraph posts in her vicinity.



A great cloud of smoke and dust rose into the air.

When, three days later, Rodney and Cator went ashore at Perim to obtain more coal, and to have lunch with the British subaltern in command of the hundred Sepoys who garrison the island, they entertained this worthy to a graphic account of the scene in the desert as the great cloud rose from the explosion.

"It must have been a fine sight," he said, "but I will knock it out here if any of the enemy's fleet comes along."

"How?" inquired Rodney.

"There are 30,000 tons of coal always in stock on this island, and my orders are to set fire to the lot when I consider there is any danger of its falling into the hands of an enemy. That'll be worth seeing on a fine night, won't it?"

CHAPTER VIII.

On the Boulevards.

During the first days of the war Paris was in a frenzied state of exultation.

Along the boulevards and in the cafés excited groups, moved by the common impulse of national enthusiasm, gathered to discuss in extravagant language, and with all the heat of Gallic passion, this sudden swoop upon an unsuspecting foe. With every class of the community the war was popular. Work was laid aside and pleasure forgotten whilst *ouvrier* and patrician mingled in a common abandonment of rapture which showed how fiercely and deep burnt the fires of hereditary hatred.

"Agincourt is at last avenged!" screamed one heated orator from the pedestal of the statue of Jean d'Arc, to which he had climbed at the bidding of a tumultuous mob. "The hated Saxon is at our feet. We spared him at Waterloo, but it was only to sweep him in the end more cleanly from his wretched island!"

And this bombast was cheered to the echo.

The very *gamins* took up the cry and patrolled the streets shrieking insolent vaudevilles tossed off by the score by newspaper hacks, and all turning on some ribald jest at the expense of the enemy. One of the most popular, set to a well-known air, which Yvette Guilbert was then singing at the Casino, ran:

Ca y est, donc, en l'Angleterre,
Front de bœuf, et plein d'bière,
Trop de ventre pour s'enfuir,
V'là un homme, qui nous fait rire.

And crowds of people marched along the streets at night repeating, with inexhaustible delight, this feeble quatrain.

No Ministry had ever been so popular. The President—who took care to ride in the Bois—was followed by a cheering mob, and the Foreign Minister was carried bodily along the Champs Elysées from the Louvre to the Arc de Triomphe, where he was made to deliver a thrilling and patriotic speech.

"We win too early and forgive too late!" muttered a deputy who shook his head at the premature rejoicings of his countrymen.

Later in the day the Foreign Minister detailed his adventures to the President, and was jubilant at the course of events.

But the head of the Republic manifested anxiety on the question of supplies. "I hope that America may be impelled to take our side," he said. "We must conceal our desires with regard to Canada at present."

"The United States can always be counted upon to make

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a disturbance at the right moment, despite this show of friendship towards England," replied the Foreign Minister. "When Europe was apparently in line on the Turkish question, Russian diplomacy, backed up by more potent arguments, brought about the Venezuelan trouble, and diverted attention from Constantinople. I hear from Petersburg that the Tsar is endeavouring to arrange fresh difficulties between England and the United States on some point."

For a while the Parisians were too much occupied with celebrating their success to mark the absence of subsequent news. The telegram which announced the capture of Worthing had satisfied their vanity. But after a time came strange rumours that a hitch had occurred somewhere. Despite the persistence of the Press, which hour to hour flooded the streets with exciting information of an advance upon London, the flight of the Queen of England to Balmoral and the suicide of the Lord Mayor, there came a moment's pause in the general rejoicing.

Le Matin had announced that the French fleet had been sighted off Brest, and was making for the harbour.

At first the intelligence was received with incredulity, and the office of Le Matin was besieged by a furious mob, which broke the windows and would have torn the editor to shreds if he had not made his escape to the cellar.

When confirmation came, it was instantly declared that the return of the navy was only a subtle stratagem to lure the British to a more disastrous overthrow. No one believed that it could mean retreat. But the sage deputy observed with foreboding that the President did not ride in the Bois that day. Le Gaulois shrieked more fiercely than ever.

"England," it declared, "shivers behind her money-bags. This monster of injustice cares not that her honour is gone, but she trembles for her gold. Lord Chamberlain and Sir Balfour are quaking beneath the beak of the eagle, and our navy, triumphant, returns to bear us the glorious news."

But, alas! this false security could ill withstand the shock of truth.

On Friday morning the people of Brest witnessed a terrible sight. The shattered French ships of the allied fleets, crushed, maimed, and helpless, slowly made their way into the harbour, with sides ripped up and masts gone, with decks ploughed with shot and rudders almost useless. A horrified crowd assembled on the quay, and stood aghast and shuddering at these awful tokens of overwhelming ruin.

Along the narrow gangways were borne the wounded and dying.

But their grief and rage knew no bounds when along the narrow gangways were borne ashore the wounded and dying in agonising and what seemed endless file. The havoc of the fight had made unutterable wrecks of the splendid crews who a few days before had manned the vessels in the pride of perfect manhood. Horrible wounds and ghastly fractures, such as our modern shells cause, which leave scarcely a trace of human form and tear to fragments the frames of their victims, sent tremours through the crowd.

There could no longer be doubt. The fool's paradise in which a whole nation had lived for so brief a space was rudely demolished.

The fatal news spread apace, and in a few hours Paris lay prostrate beneath the blow. Nor was it long before the whole catastrophe became known, how two great navies had been crushed, and England, taken by surprise and scarce defended, still rose above the sea, calm and triumphant, unsoiled by the touch of a hostile foot.

Mercurial in its moods, quick to extremes of anger as to extremes of joy, knowing no mean between the two, and incapable of that phlegmatic courage which receives defeat with courage as it welcomes victory without undue elation, the Paris mob, when it had recovered from the stun of the terrible news, became frantic with ungovernable rage.

Wild crowds rushed through the streets in fury, maddened by humiliation and reckless with passion. An exultant people had in a moment become a savage mob. There was but one thought, that of revenge on someone, anyone, who might suggest himself to the disordered public mind.

As the day drew to its close the more peaceful citizens became alarmed. Paris was no longer under control. Violent speakers, foaming with fury, demanded a new government—a communism—a new reign of terror. The members of the Cabinet had fled to their houses, and the President was compelled to surround the Elysée with troops.

Instead of calming the public feeling, the Parisian papers fanned the flame of revolt.

"*Nous sommes trahis!*" exclaimed Le Figaro in its opening words of comment, "France is once more the devoted victim of the treachery of her own sons. She has been delivered, by base intrigue, to her ruin. English gold and German hatred have bought her rulers. We are sacrificed to their perfidy. Her trusting confidence and

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simple love have been the ministers to her destruction. Down with the traitors! *A l'Elysée! A l'Elysée!*"

Le Journal boldly declared the Foreign Minister to be the ruling spirit of this betrayal, and the Minister who was shouldered along the streets on Thursday by an enthusiastic multitude was execrated on Friday as "*le second Judas.*" Not a member of the Cabinet was safe. It would have been death to any one of them had he appeared.

This rumour of treachery travelled like wildfire, and caused a panic. Fierce spirits, let loose by the general disorder, commenced at dusk to assault such passers-by as they chose to suspect; some of the shops in the Rue de Rivoli were looted, and an attempt was made to break into the Palais Royal, which had been closed early in the day.

But the more serious papers, excited and extravagant, yet not without some sense of responsibility, sought to allay the storm.

Beyond all, realising that their justification of the sudden movement against England lay only in its success, they displayed an anxiety to convince the world that it was inevitable and imperative, and this they found no easy task.

It was ominous that the Paris edition of the New York Herald had, during the first three days, contented itself with the bare chronicling of the dramatic sweep of events. There was no word of comment; the editor was studiously dumb. It was as if delicacy to the people over whom the newspaper exercised so potent an influence demanded silence—a silence that had all the force of a tacit condemnation.

Commenced at dusk to assault such passers-by as they chose to suspect.

Le Matin had confidently appealed to old alliances and a common foe. It recalled hysterically the ancient feud with England which resulted in the establishment of an independent country across the water. But the Herald was not stirred to response, nor even to quotation, and the imperturbability of a journal noted for its piquant and lively comment produced a serious impression upon the more responsible French papers.

But matters became worse later on, when the opinion of the native American press upon the situation was flashed along the Mackay-Bennett cable. If respect to the land of its adoption made the Paris Herald silent, at least it did not prevent the insertion of quotations from the newspapers published at home, and their tone was non-committal enough to cause misgiving wherever the hope of active sympathy prevailed.

On the Saturday morning the Paris edition of the New York Herald, under a demure heading which carefully avoided sensation, published the following:

"We have scrupulously refrained from passing an opinion on the sensational events of the past few days. An American journal on French territory should at least respect the obligations of a guest, and it is impossible for us, as it would be discourteous, to throw our weight into the camp of either belligerent. It is our plain duty to preserve a neutral attitude. We therefore print, without comment, extracts from some of the more influential papers of America which have reached us though cable to-day.

"The Boston Herald passes no opinion on the rights of the quarrel between England and those who are attacking her. But it insists that the policy of America is absolute neutrality, 'Under no circumstances,' continues that journal, 'can we depart from the spirit of the Monroe doctrine, which practically restricts the United States to her own shores. So long as her independence is in no way threatened, she has no possible justification for embroiling herself in European complications. America will witness the struggle calmly to the end.'

"The New York World observes: 'We are in horror of what has occurred. Civilisation stands aghast at the iniquity of the blow. It seems as if the Continent has swept away its centuries of progression, and stands stripped to the skin, disclosing the primeval savage. If France imagines that she can count upon the assistance of the United States because of past services, she has made a profound mistake. We do not forget the insults of France and Germany during our war with Spain. Liberty is the watchword of our constitution, and it is the interest, no less than the earnest desire of a great republic, to protest against a giant wrong perpetrated in the name of a giant greed. All Americans will abhor the outburst that threatens to overwhelm England, and in her time of need we frankly admit her to be the pioneer of freedom and peace.'"

America was clearly to be neutral, as international law compelled, and these words flashed across the sea were ominously suggestive of the vanity of French hopes in this direction.

There were several of the more dignified papers in Paris which laboured to excuse the action of the United Powers in the eyes of the powerful Republic and incite her to action.

The Débats had a statesmanlike article, endeavouring to show that the war was an act of necessity. The whole country, it protested, was suffering from want of colonies. Trade demanded expansion; there was needed a broadening of the dominions to satisfy the ambitions and the just aims of an active people. On all hands were signs of a suffering nation, searching in vain for a market; her sons, meanwhile, compelled to remain at home for lack of new fields for their energies. England had seized the earth, and force alone could secure a just balance.

But America remained impassive to these arguments.

Yet some good fruits accrued from these passionate articles. Paris, so childlike in her impulses, was brought round to a reasonable mood, and though there was no longer enthusiasm or hysterical fervour, there was at least a calmer spirit—a more resolute front.

On the following Monday a Council of war was summoned

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at the Elysée. It was a full meeting of French and German Ministers, and the conference was long and anxious.

The terrible repulse of the fleet had come upon them all with consternation; there was no longer the air of certainty which prevailed at first. The President of the Republic thought less of Whitehall, and Count Holbach had postponed his negotiations for the occupation of Gibraltar.

The Foreign Minister was still confident.

"The fleet is driven back," he observed; "but that is a bagatelle. We have in the Mediterranean a combined force of men and ships powerful enough to decimate the whole British Empire. Let us not be discouraged. Before the enemy is able to call together its scattered strength we shall have sailed through the Straits and formed a fatal cordon around the British Islands."

This sounded reasonable enough. The stupendous fleet of the two countries was already on its way. It was a gathering of giants, and the English defences seemed feeble and ridiculous before it.

"In five days," observed the German Chancellor, "we shall be once more in the Channel. We have delayed, not thrown away, the victory."

At this moment a special messenger arrived with a telegram. The President opened it, and turned pale as he read:

"Gentlemen," he said slowly, "this message tells us that the enemy has been forewarned. The Suez Canal is blown up, and we have no longer a road to India."

There was a dead silence. The news had stunned them.

At last Count Holbach essayed to deal with the situation.

"These English are full of resource," he said. "They mean to give us trouble. So much the worse for them. Meanwhile let us not be over-concerned. Our plan lies not just now through the Suez. We will cripple the island, and then let India do what it will. The boom of our guns will be heard by the shores of Britain before the week is out. Give me seven days and I will lay her helpless."

Another knock came, and another messenger with a telegram.

The President bit his lips.

"The Straits of Gibraltar are blockaded!" he exclaimed. "This is annoying; our plans must suffer delay. But, thank Heaven, it is nothing worse."

"Nothing worse!" It was General Gourko, hitherto silent, who intervened. "You regard this as of less moment?"

"It merely delays us," returned the President.

"Gentlemen," declared Gourko, "the first telegram was disturbing enough; the second is appalling. Do you not see what has happened?"

There were inquiring murmurs. Everyone turned an anxious gaze upon the Russian general.

"It means," he continued impressively, "that the Mediterranean is no longer a sea. It is impassable. It is now reduced to the condition of a lake, and your great fleets are imprisoned in it without possibility of escape. You are stripped of your most powerful arm."

"We can seize Malta!" stammered the President.

"Malta," observed Gourko, "is impregnable, and it is provisioned for three years. England has destroyed exit and entrance, and your splendid ships are of no further use to you!"

At this solemn pronouncement, which was so obviously true, there came into the breasts of the Council a terrible fear. For the first time it dawned upon them that their task was not so easy as it appeared, that, amazing to say, England might yet rise in her strength and smite them all!

(To be continued.)

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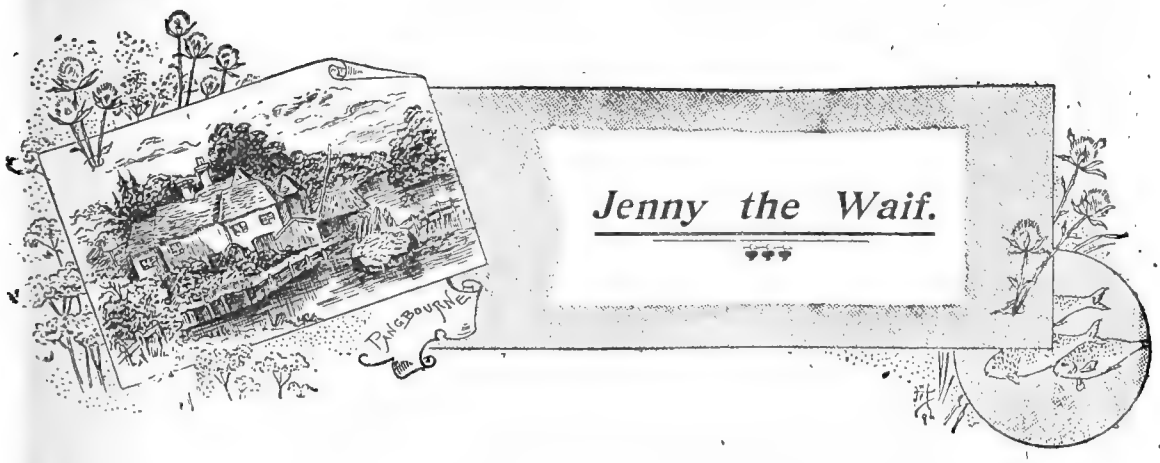

"I JUST hate being a drudge!" grumbled Jenny, giving a little cry of pain as a splinter from the dry firewood pierced her finger. "I just hate it! And I hate everything here."

She dropped the stick and began to pull at the splinter. It came out, bringing a drop of blood. The finger was hard and callous, the hands rough and red. The face was rough and red too, fiery red now with anger.

Everyone called her Crooked Jenny. This was because she was a dwarfish hump-back. Mrs. Hetherington declared that she deserved the name quite as much because of her crooked temper.

Jenny Low had been in the Hetherington home three years. Her parents were dead, and the uncle as well with whom she lived after the death of her parents. When this uncle died, Mrs. Hetherington brought Jenny home. There seemed nothing else to be done.

Perhaps she meant to do well by the girl. Certainly she expected Jenny to "pay her way," and was diligent in her efforts to see that she did.

Having extracted the splinter from her finger, Jenny picked up the offending stick and hurled it from her with fierce anger, not noting and not caring the direction.

The door opened at that moment, and the flying stick struck Mrs. Hetherington on the shoulder, almost knocking her from her feet.

"I'll whip you for that, Jenny, see if I don't!" Mrs. Hetherington declared, her face aflame.

She crossed the intervening space before the astonished girl could rise to beat a retreat, and took her savagely by the shoulder.

"What do you mean by throwing that stick?"

She shook the girl violently. Jenny caught her breath, set her teeth and said not a word, though her contracted brows and the rebellious lines in her face spoke volumes.

"Why don't you answer me?" Mrs. Hetherington demanded. "Why don't you speak? Why did you throw that stick? Did you do it to hit me? I'm sure you did. You're the worst child I ever saw in all my born days! I've a good mind to thrash you to within an inch of your life!"

"I don't care," was Jenny's defiant assertion. "I don't care if you kill me!"

Mrs. Hetherington's anger appeared to gain volume She pulled the girl roughly across the floor, pushed her before her up the stairs, and locked her in a dark room.

It was a worse punishment than whipping.

Jenny paid no more heed to whippings than she did to the dropping rain on the grass and leaves, but she feared the darkness and loneliness of that room.

But it did not conquer her. It only roused her to fiercer defiance.

When Mrs. Hetherington retreated down the stairs Jenny was screaming, kicking on the door and shouting out her hate like a veritable little savage.

For half an hour afterwards, screams continued to issue from that upper room, and kicks to rain on the door. The furious little heart hated everything that lived. She knew the story of her wrong-doing would be told to Mr. Hetherington as soon as he stepped into the house, and she hated him for his expected condemnation. Above all things else, she hated herself, her crooked back, her homely, red face, and rough, red hands. Why was she born, she asked herself, to be an unloved and unlovely drudge?

Three hours later, when the night shadows were gathering, Mr. Hetherington pushed into the dark room, carrying a lantern. He had heard his wife's story and had a vague feeling that perhaps she had been hasty and harsh. As for himself, Mr. Hetherington had never given much heed to the little waif that the world's currents had drifted into his home.

He did not at first see the crooked form in the corner, where Jenny, having exhausted herself, had fallen asleep. When he did see her and observed the tear stains on the ill-favoured face, his lips twitched. She started up with a cry of fright as the light fell on her.

"It's only me, Jenny," he said softly. "It's time for you to go to bed, you know. You'll catch your death up here."

"I don't care," she declared, bitter memory reasserting itself.

"Tut, tut!" he cried, uncomfortably touched. "It's only foolish people who talk that way. You'll feel different in the morning. The supper's been cleared

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away, but"—hesitatingly—"here's an apple. I happened to have it in my pocket."

Jenny understood, but said nothing. To the torture of the dark room was always added deprivation of supper. However, she did not reach up to take the apple.

"What I wanted to say, though, and why I've come for you, instead of Mrs. Hetherington," he went on, "is that we've got company; they're down in the parlour now. I never give it much thought, but I s'pose it must be rather lonely for you here sometimes?"

Jenny maintained a perverse and dogged silence.

"They came over from the village an hour or so ago," he exclaimed, shifting uneasily to the other foot, "Mrs. Gordon and her baby, or rather her little girl, for she's about a year and a half old by now. Her husband died, you see, and being Mrs. Hetherington's own cousin, and no place to go, she come up here and we've agreed to do by her the best we can. I hope you'll like her, Jenny, her and the baby."

This last doubtfully.

"I don't want to see her," said Jenny, her heart icing again. She began to feel that Mr. Hetherington's unexampled kindness had its seat in a desire to keep Mrs. Gordon from knowing she had been badly treated. "She'll hate me, same's everybody does, when she sees my crooked back and red face, and finds out how bad I am sometimes. I know she'll hate me, and I don't want to see her."

"I dunno about that," argued Mr. Hetherington. "I don't hate you, and I don't believe she'll do anything of the kind, either. I fancy that she's going to like you."

He still held the apple in his hand. It was juicy and red-cheeked, and she loooked at it hungrily. A hard sob struggled out of the little throat, and a smiling look came into the eyes, but she did not take the apple.

"Now, I'm going to light you downstairs to bed, if you'll let me," he went on. "Things'll look different in the morning, when the sun's shining and the birds singin'. I've often noticed that they do. And you're certain to like Mrs. Gordon and the baby. Its name is Emmy. Emmy Gordon is a pretty name, I think."

His face flushed, when she was still silent, and he put the apple back into his pocket. The repulse hurt him. He took up the lantern and stepped to the top of the stairs, and she, getting up from the corner, followed.

At the bottom he left her without a word. She heard the sounds of conversation and laughter in the parlour, which was brilliantly illuminated, then scudded like a rat to the little back room where she slept.

The next day, the pink baby face, the toddling limbs, the big blue eyes and the cooing trustfulness of the child drew out Crooked Jenny's love in a surging wave.

The starved little heart gave to the baby all the love it had so long held in check, a love that in its power and depth was fairly worshipful.

"It's really wonderful how Jenny takes to your Emmy," Mrs. Hetherington declared to Mrs. Gordon before a week had gone by. "I've got to watch her or she'll steal the baby out or coax her upstairs when you ain't watching.

"I wish you'd just look at them romping now! I'm almost afraid to trust her, though. She's that changeable there's no depending on her."

At that moment Crooked Jenny was playing "camel."

She was down on her hands and knees, with the baby on her back, and she was plunging and prancing in what she conceived to be the true camel style.

"I'm a pretty good camel with that hump on my back, ain't I?" they heard her say; and somehow the tone and the question touched them.

Jenny saw them looking at her, and a great fear chilled her heart.

"I must be careful or they won't let me play with her at all," was her thought; and from that time there was a change in her demeanour toward the child.

Mrs. Hetherington observed this and duly commented on it, in her disparaging way, citing it as a proof of Crooked Jenny's fickleness.

One day Mrs. Hetherington and Mrs. Gordon sat in the kitchen, absorbed in talk.

The sunshine fell like a patterned carpet on the floor. The kettle sung a merry song on the stove. Little Emmy was momentarily forgotten.

A horse dragging a dog-cart dashed wildly up the road in a cloud of dust.

Crooked Jenny heard the clatter of hoofs and glanced out at the road. Her heart went into her mouth, and her pulse seemed to stand still.

Down in the dust of the road, unconscious of peril, little Emmy was playing.

With a choking cry, Crooked Jenny sprang through the open doorway. Her lips were parted and her homely face was white with a great fear. She saw the fiery-eyed horse, heard the thunder of his hoofs, and the rattle of the bounding wheels, saw the child. From her terror-filled heart a sobbing prayer went up.

The shriek that was torn from her when it seemed to her the horse's hoofs would strike the child to the earth brought to the women in the kitchen their first knowledge of little Emmy's peril. Then Crooked Jenny, rushing to the rescue, went down under the hoofs herself, and was beaten into the dust.

Crooked Jenny lay gasping and half unconscious, and her face was ashen when the women reached her, but the child was safe; Jenny had held it at arm's length, beyond the blows of the hoofs, and the wheels, and it was untouched.

Crooked Jenny came back to herself in a darkened room that made her think of the dark room upstairs. People were about her. She started up and cried out anxiously for little Emmy. The child, rosy and prattling, was placed in her arms by Mrs. Hetherington, whose eyes were red with weeping, and Jenny lay back on the pillow with a look of content. The pillow was not whiter than her face.

Mr. Hetherington glanced in a sort of dumb appeal toward the doctor, a spectacled gentleman who stood near the head of the bed and who had been very grave.

"You will relieve yourself of undue anxiety, Mr. Hetherington," he said. "Jenny will recover, though she has had a narrow escape."

Mrs. Gordon stooped and kissed the white face.

"I'm going to love you, Jenny, as if you were my very own," she promised.

The white face became pinkish with pleasure.

In a whisper and with painful effort came the answer:

"Oh, ma'am, if you only will!"

Then they began to understand what it was that Jenny had needed all those years, the simplest things, and at the same time the greatest things in the world, sympathy and love.

H. Harland.

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THE LAST RACE.

MORAZAN was a horse, white as to colour, and if I must be explicit, somewhat stiff as to legs, for he was now old, but even yet giving unmistakable evidence that his ancestors had been of no common breed.

There was something in the manner in which he occasionally laid back his ears and arched his beautiful neck, something in the flash that now and then brightened his eyes, which would have told even a stranger that he had once had a career. But that was long ago, when he had belonged to Carolos' father, the Señor Castello.

He belonged to Carolos now, and Carolos was at this moment astride his back. Morazan, the Mexican saddle, bridle and lariat, together with a minature of his mother, were all that Carolos possessed. It had been different once, but that, too, was long ago.

It seemed to Carolos as he rode leisurely down the broad avenue between the long rows of walnut trees, on the Señor Bertram's ranch, that it must have been a hundred years since the big ranch had belonged to his father, Enrico Castello; he could scarcely make himself believe that it was only six years ago.

The Señor Bertram had been very kind. His father had said so, and Carolos always remembered that. He had paid Enrico Castello, in gold, a fair price for the land, and had allowed him to live on the place the few remaining weeks of his life, and Señora Bertram had waited upon him with her own hands. And when he died she had comforted the orphan, Carolos, with gentle kindness.

After settling accounts, nothing was left for Carolos except the personal effects just mentioned, for although his father had been a gentleman of pure Spanish blood, after Carolos' mother died he had lived a reckless life. Carolos was too young at the time of his father's death to realise his financial loss. Had his fortune been left him, and Morazan and the lariat taken, he would have been wretched; but having these and the kindness of Señor Bertram, he was content, though a penniless orphan dependent upon the bounty of the English Señor.

One member of the Bertram family really loved Carolos. Ted loved him devotedly.

Ted was the only son and heir of the Bertram household, a merry, blue-eyed ten-year-old, who was at this identical moment sitting behind Carolos, astride Morazan's back, digging the horse's sides with his bare, brown heels, when he did not proceed at the speed Ted thought proper.

Like Carolos, Ted scorned shoes; indeed, he was pretty sure to scorn anything that Carolos looked upon with disfavour.

Carolos was a hero in his eyes, and whatever Carolos did, it became the sole end and aim of Ted's life to do also.

In spite of all Ted's digging with his sturdy little heels, Morazan showed no sign of increasing his speed, but continued to walk leisurely down the drive. He had received no intimation from Carolos to go faster, and he paid no attention to Ted's most vigorous hints.

Carolos, who for the last year had herded Señor Bertram's cattle, over in the hills, had been given a day off, and "John," the Chinaman who helped on the ranch, had taken his place with the herds.

Now Carolos was going back, and Ted after many entreaties was at last allowed to go for two days, when his father would drive over and bring him home. For Carolos might not be back again for weeks, as he had a camp in the hills.

Then, as he had reached the gateway leading to the road, he touched Morazan lightly, and he at once started off in a brisk walk toward the brown, irregular foot hills where Carolos' camp was situated.

* * * * *

It was the last day of Ted's stay.

It was the hottest day Carolos had ever known. The heat was excessive, and there was a strange sultriness in the air that was overpowering.

Ted succumbed under it and tumbled over under the big live oak where the tent was pitched, and was asleep before his head touched the ground.

How Carolos longed to lie down and sleep, too! The shade of the live oak had never looked so inviting, but he was uneasy about this sultriness and the murky hue that filled the atmosphere.

There must be a fire somewhere, but it could not be near enough to cause any uneasiness, surely, or he could see the smoke; perhaps the hills hid it. He brought Morazan up, and saddling him, rode round on the other side of the nearest hills, but could discover nothing.

Evidently the fire was not anywhere near, he concluded; and going back to the camp he tied Morazan near by to a large clump of green wood, that he might be ready should he deem it best to ride round presently and investigate further.

Meanwhile, if he only could lie down just for a moment! But he must not. If there was a fire anywhere in the hills, it might spread rapidly, and reach them. Carolos was troubled; what should he do in case it did reach them? Should he take Ted home and leave the herds—all Señor Bertram's fine Holsteins and Jerseys? Yes; he must if it came to the worst, but he must stay until certain that there was danger. How he wished the Señor would make haste and come for Ted, but it was so hot that he probably would not come until night.

It was strange that he felt so sleepy and stupid. It seemed impossible to keep awake, and his head felt so strangely. He went to the hydrant and plunged his head into the trough where the cattle drank, and then, coming back, sat listlessly down near Ted, under the oak.

He had only been sitting there a few moments, when his head began to droop, lower and lower, then he sank back unconsciously, and all things fled from his memory. His sleep was not a natural one, he was overcome by the excessive heat; yet, heavy as was his sleep, it was mingled with troubled dreams.

The sun beat down fiercely, the very wind seemed to scorch the dry grass round him. An hour passed, and still Carolos slept on, unconscious and unmindful of the tiny tongue of flame that was creeping round from the other side of the hills.

Nearer and nearer it came, growing in strength and volume, and filling the air with suffocating smoke. The horses and cattle down in the glen laid back their ears and huddled together for a few moments, and then

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with frightened snorts dashed madly away in every direction.

And still Carolos slept, unable to awaken from that deathlike slumber.

He was dreaming of his mother. He thought she stood over him, bending low and smiling upon him with her great, flashing, dark eyes. Lower and lower she bent, until the folds of her rebosa enveloped him—closer and closer it enfolded him—he was suffocating, strangling!

"Mother!" he cried thickly, "why do you stifle me?"

He could not hear her answer, but he heard something else.

A familiar sound fell upon his dulled ear.

It was Morazan's whinny. With a desperate effort he sat upright, and rubbed his dazed eyes. How strangely they smarted!

Again Morazan gave a long, urgent whinny. Ah, Carolos! but for Morazan neither you nor Ted would ever have awakened in this world.

In an instant Carolos was upon his feet, gazing about him with blanched face.

"Great Heavens! The fire is upon us!" he cried in a horror-stricken voice.

There was no time now to think of anything but to save Ted. The Señor Bertram had trusted the boy to Carolos and he would save the child or die with him.

Running to the hydrant he filled a bucket with water and, dashing it over the sleeping boy, succeeded in arousing him. Then catching up a blanket from out the tent and saturating it, he pinned it tightly round his neck, and helping Ted upon Morazan's back, he climbed up before the bewildered boy.

"Now crawl under the blanket, Ted; draw your feet up under it and hold tight about my waist; everything's dry as tinder and we must ride for our lives!" he said with compressed lips.

Ted did as Carolos commanded, and was entirely enveloped by the wet blanket.

Carolos let the reins loose, and, speaking an encouraging word to Moranzan, they were off like the wind. It was a difficult road out of the hills, in fact, only a steep, winding trail. How they ever clung to the horse in that mad race, Heaven only knows.

I have said that Morazan had had a career. In his young days he had been the pride of the country, and won many hundreds of pounds for Enrico Castello at the races. But never before had he ran such a race as he was running now. A race between life and death—a race in which Morazan's speed and strength were measured against the strength and speed of the fire-demon behind them!

Did the old horse remember the other days? Did his past glory and victory rise before him now?

It seemed so, for with head erect, ears laid back, and nostrils distended, he thundered on. He is on the race track again, his rival is close upon him—no need, Carolos, to whisper encouraging words; he knows as well as as yourself that two young lives are depending upon his strength and courage! The old horse is on his mettle and will save you or die in the attempt.

They have reached lower and flatter land, and have just entered a stretch of sage brush. Carolos' heart almost fails him, for he knows that when the fire reaches it, it will lick it up like tinder. Then there is a furious roar, and Carolos knows, although he dares not look back, that the fire has reached the sage brush.

Morazan gives a loud whinny, and fairly flies; his feet scarcely seem to touch the ground.

"Hold on fast, Ted," cried Carolos; then he set his teeth and, letting the reins fall, grasped the saddle pommel. With a wild, terrified snort, Morazan plunged forward.

There is a confused roar, a whirling cloud of smoke and flame, and the fire has passed over them and is licking up the grass and sage brush beyond. Now it runs round to the left and their way is clear.

Morazan half stops, shudders, staggers on, and then a dreadful cry rends the air, such a shrill, awful scream as nothing could give vent to but a horse in the throes of agony and fright.

Carolos' eyelashes and hair are singed, and his face is burnt, while his throat is full of sharp cutting pain, but he does not heed it, he hears only that dreadful cry, and again feels Morazan tremble, stagger, and then he is conscious that the brave horse is falling.

He throws his arms round Morazan's neck.

"*Adorado!*" he cries faintly, and then everything becomes a blank.

A carriage driven furiously up the road, down below, has held witnesses of this wild race; several men also are behind the carriage on horse-back.

It is the Señor Bertram with men he has gathered on the way; they have seen the fire and have hastened to the rescue of the boys.

When Carolos regained consciousness Señor Bertram was bending over him, his face working with emotion.

"Ted," whispered Carolos. His throat was so parched he could scarce y speak.

"Ted is all right, thanks to you, my brave boy," answered Ted's father unsteadily.

"And—Morazan?" Carolos asked faintly.

Señor Bertram did not answer for a moment, and Carolos covered his eyes with his hand, while a bitter sob burst from his lips.

"He is dead!" he said chokingly.

Bertram very gently drew Carolos' hand away and said kindly:

"He is not dead, my boy, and if money and care can save the noble animal, he shall live. Now our first duty is to you."

Kind hands lifted the brave boy into the carriage and he was taken home at once.

Some of the men went on to fight the fire and try to save the cattle, and the remainder stayed to attend to the noble horse whose courage and faithfulness had saved Carolos and Ted from an awful death.

And Morazan did not die. Indeed, he was well long before Carolos, whose burns were serious, and who will carry disfiguring scars upon his face as long as he lives.

During his illness he received the tenderest care, nor did he ever afterward lack for love, for the Señor Bertram adopted him and educated him as his own son.

Carolos is a man now, and in Central America he owns a fine home of his own, and a bright, dark-faced little boy calls him father. Among Carolos' most cherished treasures are the Mexican saddle, bridle, and lasso, and Morazan himself, now very old but tenderly cared for.

Frequently little Enrico goes for a walk with his father and beautiful young mother in the plaza and they invariably stop in front of the bronze statue of Morazan, the great general, and Enrico begs his father to tell him again the story of their own beloved Morazan, a story of which he never wearies; and Carolos relates for the hundredth time the story of Morazan's last race.

M. Dean.

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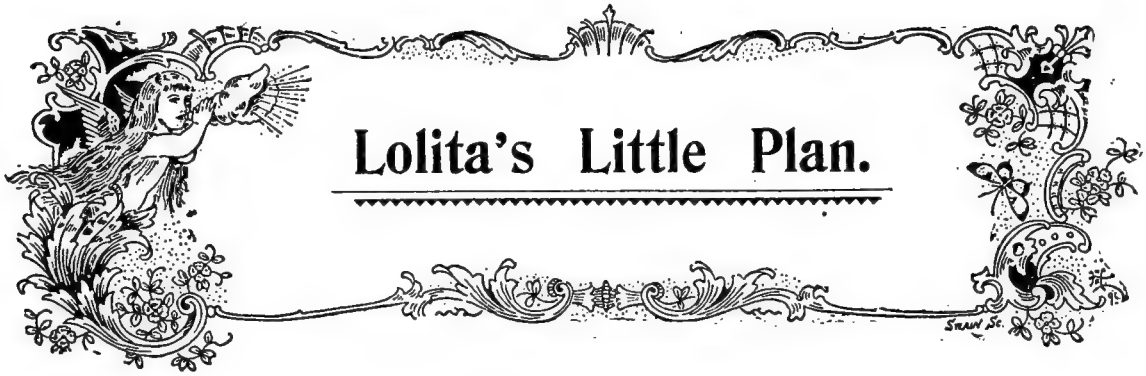

Lolita's Little Plan.

In the house of "El Chatto," ex-bull fighter of Madrid and at present performing before the Mexican public, there was dire dismay, owing to the low state—the very low state—of the family exchequer.

This sad state of affairs is common to many people among the members of the bull-fighting fraternity, who are not esteemed now as they once were.

This is, however, only in Mexico; whatever else may come and go in Spain, bull-fighting is always with them.

"El Chatto" (meaning "The Snubnose") had just finished taking his morning chocolate and roll, assisted by his pretty wife, Lolita, who also had been a member of the noble army of bull-fighters—in fact, first female *espada* in the big ring at Seville—but this was a secret.

A career that might possibly have been glorious had been cut short by "El Chatto," who had loved her, and married her.

But that was several years ago.

Successful, fêted and honoured in Cuba and afterwards in Mexico, "El Chatto's" prosperity had not lasted long, for soon had come the edict that bull-fighting in Mexico must stop.

A few desultory fights were still allowed, by which a torero could certainly not make a fortune.

This morning, the day before the bull-fight in honour of the fiesta of San Marcos, "El Chatto," needing some spare silver for the furbishing up of his costume, had turned out his pockets, with the assistance of Lolita.

Investigation revealed one big silver peso, one fifty-cent piece, one ten-cent piece and fourteen copper centavos.

Not enough to pay coach-hire, even!

Carramba! Here was a pretty mess! No wonder that "El Chatto" leisurely and calmly spoke some naughty words during the next half hour, the while Lolita tranquilly drank her chocolate, and then lit a cigarette, her dimpled face very serious all the time, as though in deep cogitation.

At last "El Chatto" glared about him, as though in search of some one to fight.

Lolita smiled at him sweetly, removing the cigarette from her pretty lips, as she murmured:

"Have you finished, my dear?"

A shrug of the shoulders was her husband's reply.

"Then listen, oh, most worthless husband, for I have a plan—a plan most magnificent; thereby we will make a fortune—sufficient for the voyage once more to Spain."

She stopped tantalisingly, and puffed at her cigarette, while "El Chatto" looked at her unbelievingly.

"This is how it is," she pursued, blowing a ring of smoke into the air; "the empresario pay you little—very little—only a hundred silver dollars—is it not so?"

"*Si*, that is all—the pigs!" growled at the torero; "and after this there will be no fight for weeks—no more money!"

"Then we will make more out of them—much more. But first, friend of my heart, will many rich people go to this fight—the president with his wife, the De la Matas, and those other rich Spaniards?"

"Yes, all of them," replied "El Chatto," who was as yet mystified, not understanding the subtle workings of his wife's brain; "but what have they to do with that wonderful plan of yours?"

Lolita smiled again, and playfully pulled her husband's ear.

"They have much to do—much!" she whispered, seating herself on the arm of his chair and pulling his moody face down to hers. "Listen, *marido mio*: this is the plan! But take care that no one hears us!"

No one hears—not even ourselves—it is whisper, whisper, whisper, and finally a loud shout of delight from "El Chatto." It must be something good—what a shame we are not let into the secret!

To-morrow seems such a long time in coming, but finally it is here—all balmy, blue sky, with never a white cloud to mar it; soft, warm breezes, laden with the perfume of roses and lilies that are just beginning to bloom.

On the cheap side—"the side of the sun"—white-garmented peons, with big sombreros, choke up every inch of space, and shout and yell loudly during the performance. As for the shady side, it is well filled—with rich Spaniards at that—for which reason the heart of Lolita rejoices; the more Spaniards, the more money.

"*Ojala* that there were nothing but Spaniards," she thinks.

She has purposely taken a seat just behind the first barrier of the bull-ring—not seven feet above the ground where her husband will kill his bull—"so that she can see him better," as she lisps to an admiring Mexican fighter, who wishes her to go into one of the boxes.

In her Sevillan costume, the silk mantilla exposing

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just enough of her Spanish eyes and dimpled chin to make people want to see more.

Lolita is by far the most admired woman in the Plaza, distracting attention even from the beautiful banderilla work that "El Largo" is going through in the ring. Many glasses are pointed at the little Española, as she so demurely watches for her husband.

Seated alone in his box, the prince of bankers, old Franquillo, drops his glass and sighs; perhaps if a girl like that one yonder had lived instead of passing away from him during the first poverty-stricken month of their married life, there in Barcelona, he would not now be a lone, forlorn man, without home, chick or child—only the money.

For though money is good, it doesn't always fill every chink of the heart!

Lolita, in spite of that sweet, shy demureness of hers, has noted the effect of her Spanish costume; she rejoices within herself, even though she is beginning to tremble a wee bit, and wishes it were not yet time for her husband to kill the bull.

She again measures the distance between herself and the ground; it is seven feet—*quien sabe!*

She is trembling from her dainty head down to her tiny Spanish slippers all the time that "El Largo" is torturing the furious, pawing bull with his sharp banderillas.

She clasps her hands tightly together, as, finally tiring of the banderilla work—which, in fact, has been somewhat long drawn out, "on account of the matador 'El Chatto's' sudden illness and faintness"—the public of the sunny side begin to shout:

"El matador! Kill the bull! We want the matador! El matador!"

The gate swings open at last, and "El Largo" still teases the bull as "El Chatto" moves forward slowly, and bows first to the president and then to the public.

In spite of his magnificent silver and violet costume, the gold lace and real bullion trimming, with cape of gold brocade, he looks deathly ill—his eyes show great black rings that extend almost half-way down his face.

Every one remarks it, and a foreigner, who has looked keenly at the bull-fighter, says sharply:

"That fellow ought to go home: he's in no condition to fight!"

But "El Chatto" is game if he is ill—perhaps the presence of his wife inspires him with fresh courage, for he unsheathes his bright, keen sword, nods briefly to "El Largo," who gets out of the way, smiles once at Lolita, who is, beneath her mantilla, far whiter than he; then he makes a tantalising movement at the bull.

That animal—one of the huge, fiery Andalusians that are the very terror of Mexican bull-fighters—comes on with a roar of fury, head swinging low to the ground, and the angry foam flying. "El Chatto" dodges, and places himself nearer the wall to meet the bull's return rush.

On he comes again, with an angry bellow, and "El Chatto" shakes the sword playfully in the brute's face, as is the Spanish custom—six or seven fancy passes, and then the kill.

After all, no one can fight a bull as does the Spanish matador. At least, during "El Chatto's" splendid work of the next seven minutes that is what the people think. All of them are on their feet, shrieking, some breathless with delight! Silver dollars, and hats, and flowers rain down into the ring, but "El Chatto" has not time to bow his thanks; he is too busy avoiding the plunges of the Andalusian.

On her feet, as is everybody else, for that matter, Lolita is watching every motion, her heart beating in great leaps, and so excited and wrought up now that she has forgotten to feel afraid.

Bull and matador are just underneath her, and twice her husband has glanced at her significantly; she is watching with her heart in her eyes. One pass of the sword before the bull's eyes; one leap over his back; one pass of the sword backward over the shoulder; now then, a-h-h!

In the twinkling of an eye there goes up from the thousands of people a loud groan of horror, pity, and terror.

For in a second it happens that the matador, suddenly reeling, after a fancy pass at the bull, has cast one agonised look up at his wife, and fallen prone on the ground.

The bull does not see, for the impetus of his last charge has taken him several feet beyond the matador. At the latter's side, on the ground, is the bright sword, that now will not save him.

The man was ill, unable to fight.

But before the people have well seen that, however, there is a quick leap and a flash; a slight childish figure is in the ring, her mantilla is cast back, the pink rose has fallen into the dust; her tiny white hands have caught up the sword.

As the bull swings madly forward, she meets him. He is an enormous beast, and to be on a line even with his shoulder she has to rise on tiptoe. She does it. Her face is white and calm as the brute rushes at her lowering his head. She springs forward and upward; the sword sinks out of sight in the bleeding shoulder—no fancy passes for her—the bull topples over on his knees, the blood gushing out in torrents. He is disabled—dying!

As for the spectators, they have passed from horror-stricken silence and terror into hysterical shouts, screams, applause, and even tears. Every woman in the audience is weeping copiously. Every man is shrieking, and stamping, and applauding at the top of his voice (in his heart envying the matador) as the girl, who has in some mysterious way revived her husband, rises to her feet, and the two stand together for a moment, bowing.

Then comes the exciting part of it. Out come purses and coins and even jewels from the rich ladies present, and masses of flowers. Amid shouts of "Bravo!" down it all pours into the ring. As for the great banker, Franquillo—who is so excited that he can hardly move—down goes his footman with a message to "La Española!"

Not waiting to bow or to thank the people, so overcome is she with her tremendous success, Lolita flies from the ring, leaving "El Chatto" to bow, and place his hands over his heart and bow again. It is all she can do to tremblingly thank the bearer of a message from the banker, Franquillo, who has promised her a cheque for five hundred pounds.

So that Lolita's little plan worked well after all—so well that five days later she and her husband left for Spain, where, having added much more money to the banker's gift, they have now retired and are great people.

And "El Chatto" says always that he owes his success to his wife—which is not understood, very naturally, by the Spaniards of Spain.

J. H. Horley.

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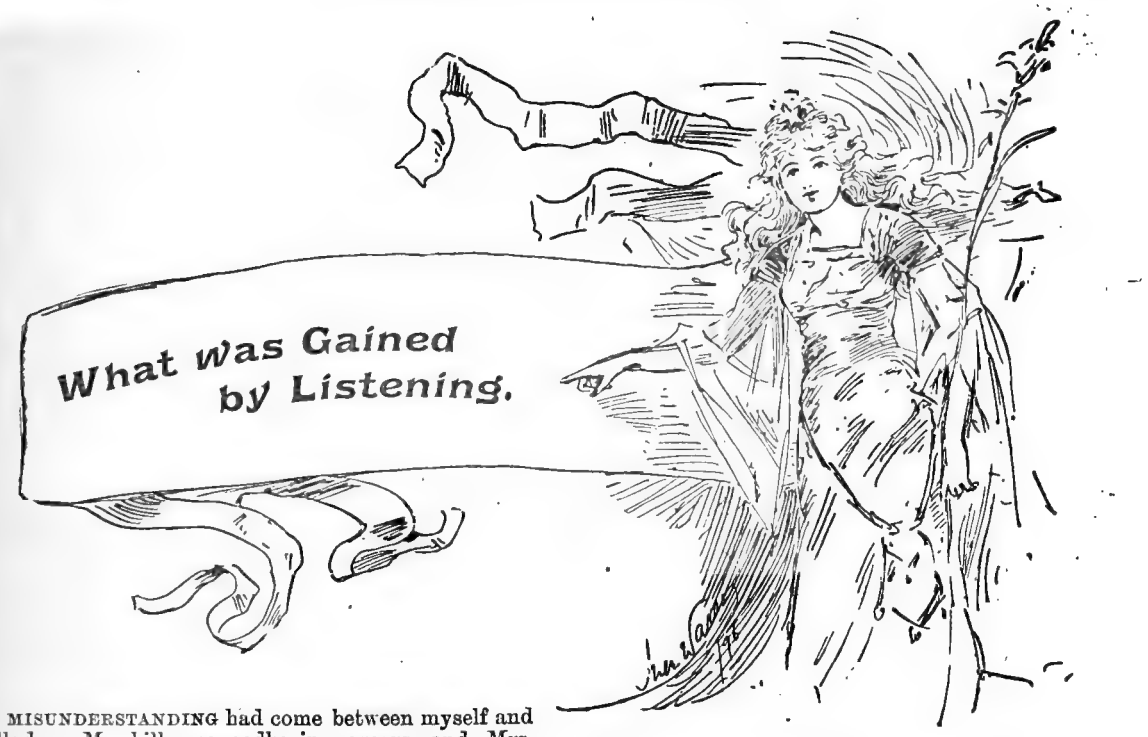

What Was Gained by Listening.

A MISUNDERSTANDING had come between myself and landlady. My bill was sadly in arrears, and Mrs. Ringwood, having passed from frowns to words and from words to importunity, had ended with a peremptory demand for payment.

Not being ready or having the ready money to comply with her requirement, I had nothing for it but to vacate my room and surrender my key, the former being wanted, I was given to understand, for Mr. MacIntyre, an old customer of Mrs. Ringwood, whom she was under a standing promise to accommodate, and whose arrival was hourly expected.

Mr. MacIntyre, I may here say, was Mrs. Ringwood's Mrs. Harris, a convenient myth, one who never came, but was always coming when a delinquent lodger was to be got rid of.

I had come to the town to be an author, but my efforts with the pen to scrape acquaintance with fame and fortune had not proved over successful.

Down to my last half-crown, with no immediate prospect of another, and wearied with a long search for a cheap lodging, where terms were not "invariably in advance," I sat me down in an out-of-the-way eating-house to face a tough beefsteak, and the still tougher question of what was best to be done.

A grave-looking gentleman sat opposite, dividing his attention between a bottle of wine and the evening paper.

"What a bungling set these detectives are!" said the gentleman, whose tone left it doubtful whether he spoke to himself or me.

"Why," he continued, addressing me this time, "here's that bank robbery nearly a week old, and with every clue to guide them; yet those who should have been hot on the scent within an hour, still stand gaping, with their fingers in their mouths. Things were managed differently in my day."

"You were a detective once?" I ventured to surmise.

He nodded.

"There is a reward—is it very large?" I asked.

"Five hundred pounds," he answered, "for the recovery of the property and capture of the thief."

"'Twould be a quick way to make money," said I, "if one knew how to go about it."

"Would you like to go halves in making the effort?" he queried, summing me up with a scrutinising glance.

"I fear I should be of little service," I returned. "I have had no experience in such matters, and am almost a stranger in the city."

"The very thing to render your aid invaluable! This crime is evidently not the work of a novice, and to your professional thief every detective's face is as familiar as a pal's. The mere sight of one puts the game to flight. Under skilful guidance you could work unsuspected. Now, if you'll put yourself in my hands for thirty-six hours, I believe we can bag the prize. What say you; is it a bargain?"

It was not exactly the road to fortune I had set out in, but it looked like a shorter cut at starting. At any rate, my circumstances were desperate, and I saw no better chance to mend them.

"I accept your offer," I said,

"Come along, then," said the stranger, rising; and having settled our scores we left the place together.

In the street he took my arm, and after a long walk through unfrequented by-streets my companion called a halt before a sombre-looking house, into which he admitted us with a latch-key. He led the way upstairs to a shabbily furnished apartment, in which a dim light was burning.

We sat down and my companion was beginning to unfold his plans when a knock was heard at the door.

He held up his finger in token of silence.

The knock was three times repeated in a peculiar manner, when my host got up and cautiously opened the door.

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A man stood outside with his hat pulled over his eyes.

"Excuse me a moment," said my companion, stepping out and closing the door.

I heard low and earnest voices in the passage, but only distinguish the words:

"Train for London at 7. Aberdeen train at 8.30."

Soon there was a sound of departing footsteps, and the door of the room opened and the proprietor entered.

"I've no time to explain further now," he said. "Meet me at the Central Station in time for the 7 o'clock train to London.

"But I have no money," I answered.

"I'll see to that," he replied.

There was little time to lose, and I rose to go.

"Would you mind carrying this bag?" said he. "I have a short stop to make by the way, besides having a larger one to look after."

I received from his hand the article in question, which was small and light.

As I was half an hour early, and it was rather chilly on the platform, I thought I would step just inside the telegraph office, while watching for my friend.

I had once been a telegraph clerk, and there was a fascination for me in the clicking of the instrument. Of course, I had learnt to read messages by the ear; I naturally fell to reading the clicks. It is said eavesdroppers rarely hear good of themselves, and the present case, though the listening was involuntary, proved no exception.

Judge of my amazement when I heard clicked off, in a language to me as plain as speech, a full description of my person and everything pertaining to me, down to the bag in my hand, in which latter it was said would be found a portion of the bonds stolen from the Amalgamated Bank. I did not stay to hear what followed, which was doubtless an order for my immediate arrest.

The truth at once flashed upon me. I had been made the dupe of the real culprit, who had sought to cover his own retreat by a ruse of which I was to be the victim.

I left the station and walked away rapidly, keeping to the side streets as much as possible, and had gone a considerable distance before venturing to stop a policeman and inquire the way to the police station or office where I could see the chief of the detective force.

Following the directions, I lost no time in presenting myself to Inspector White.

"I think I have discovered the man who is wanted for the Bank robbery," said I, as coolly as I could.

"It'll be money in your pocket and a feather in your cap if you have," said he, eyeing me curiously. "It's very queer, though," he added, looking from me to a paper before him.

I proceeded to give a complete narrative of what had occurred since my falling in with the pretended ex-detective, expressing the opinion that the latter would be found taking the 7 o'clock train for London.

"The telegram for your arrest," said the Inspector "was sent by myself on information coming from an unknown source, but which I did not feel at liberty to neglect. Your coming directly here speaks in your favour. But let us see what is in the bag."

It was speedily opened, and in it was found a package of the missing bonds, a description of which was in the possession of the authorities. In giving them up my late acquaintance had sacrificed but little, as there would have been small chance of disposing of them, while putting them in my possession was a cunning device to divert suspicion from himself to me.

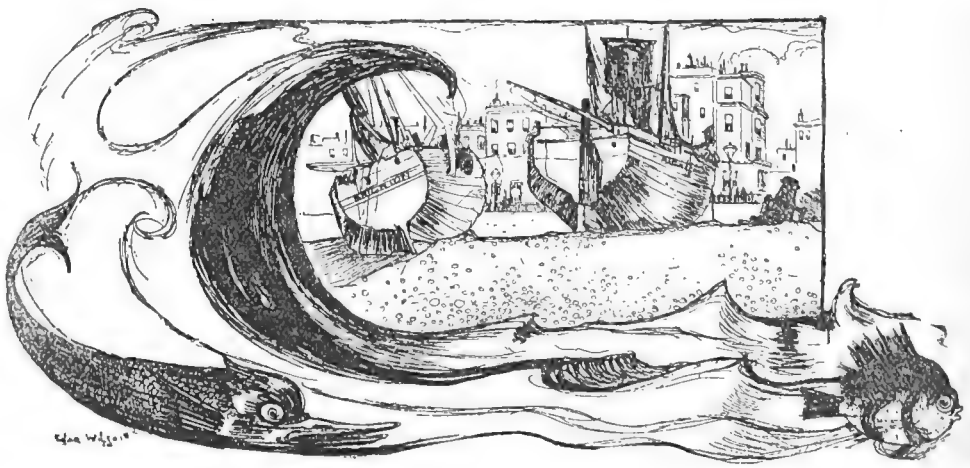
A cab was called, and in company with the Inspector and two subordinates I was taken to the Central Station, which we reached a few minutes before the departure of the train.

Snugly ensconced in a first class carriage, we discovered the object of our search, and in whom the officers recognised an old acquaintance. In his possession was found all the stolen money and securities except those he had placed in my hands.

I was formally detained till next morning when Mrs. Ringwood and two of her lodgers, the former being kind enough not to mention my little delinquency toward herself, gave so good an account of me, and proved so clearly that I was quietly at home at the time of the robbery, that I was discharged.

I got the £500, ceased to court the muses but married Nancy Walker, gave up poetry for journalism, and have found, if not fame, at least something like a fortune in it.

D. Hart.



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ALL FAT PEOPLE

Readily **Reduce Weight** and **Cure Corpulency Permanently** by taking **TRILENE TABLETS** (Regd.) for a few weeks. They are very agreeable, harmless, and never fail to **PRESERVE** both **HEALTH** and **FIGURE** without change of diet. **Reduction begins immediately.**

An English Countess writes: "*Your Trilene Tablets act admirably.*"

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MISS HEYWOOD, 77 Hindhill Street, Heywood, Lancs., says: "I am 21lb. lighter, and my rheumatism also seems cured."

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Send **2/6** to **THE TRILENE ASSOCIATION, 66 Pinsbury Pavement, London, E.C.**

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THE WONDERFUL **METAL POLISHER**

The Lustre Lasts!

Pyn-Ka Leaves no Scratches!

Cleans and burnishes gold, silver, plate, copper, brass, nickel, tin, glass, etc., better, quicker, and at less cost of labour and money than any other polish known.

Paste or tablets, 1d. to 6d. All dealers.

£20

Hairdressers fitted up. Estimates Free. Tobacconists Commencing. See Illustrated Guide (259 pages), free. How to open a cigar store, £20 to £2,000. Tobacconists Outfitting Company, 186 Euston Road, London. The largest and original house (50 years' reputation). Mgr., H. Myers.

NOSE

A RADICAL PERMANENT CURE.

Medically approved for Red Noses, 3/9, post free, under cover. Pamphlet, "Red Noses, Cause and Prevent on," 1/-; Machines for Ugly Noses, particulars for stamp.

LEES RAY,

SPECIALIST,

SOUTH CASTLE ST.,

LIVERPOOL.

MAKE PRIME BEER AT HOME

Good! it's **Mason's**

EXTRACT OF HERBS

6D. BOTTLE MAKES **8** GALLONS

NON-INTOXICATING **BEER**

The most palatable refreshing tonic drink producible.

IMITATED but NOT EQUALLED

Of all Chemists and Stores. Also try Mason's Wine Essences and Mason's Coffee Essence. Sample bottle of either of above post FREE for 9d. Two, assorted, 1s. 8d.; Three, assorted, 1s. 8d. *Agents Wanted.*

NEWBALL & MASON, NOTTINGHAM.

The BEST BEVERAGE for YOUR MEALS.

£10, £5, £3, £1 CASH PRIZES!

NO DIVISION. THE LOWEST PRIZE WILL BE NOT LESS THAN £1 GUARANTEED.

WOLFF & CO.'S NEW GENUINE COMPETITION.

In order to advertise the wonderful discovery of the JET BLACK and BRILLIANT RED "EGYPTIAN" MARKING INKS, we have decided to offer the above prizes to the Purchasers of a bottle of Wolff's Black or Red Marking Ink, post free, 1s. 6d.; Foreign Orders, 3s., payable in London.

WE WOULD SAY THAT OUR PREVIOUS COMPETITIONS HAVE GIVEN FULLEST SATISFACTION, AND WE HAVE MANY LETTERS FROM DELIGHTED PRIZE WINNERS.

Grasp this opportunity to win a prize. The Competition consists in filling in correctly the missing letters in the six following sentences relating to WOLFF'S EGYPTIAN MARKING INK.

1. W----S I----------E M-----G I-K
2. P-------Y F---D
3. A S----E P-------E
4. A------S R----N U-------D
5. I---------Y U---------E
6. R-----S C------E

Wolff's Imperishable Marking Ink is popularly famed. It has a simple procedure, and apparels marked with it remain undamaged. Wolff' Marking Ink is indubitably unalterable, and remains cohesive. It requires no heating or preparation, may be used with any ordinary pen, and articles marked with Wolff's "Egyptian" Marking Ink can be washed immediately, as this Ink requires no fixing.

THOUSANDS OF UNSOLICITED TESTIMONIALS.

The Cash Prizes will be awarded as follows:

TO EACH PURCHASER WHO FILLS IN CORRECTLY ALL THE WORDS, £10; 13 WORDS, £5; 11 WORDS, £3; 8 WORDS, £1. FOR LESS THAN 8 WORDS, NO PRIZE.

WHAT TO DO.—When you have found what you think are the correct words, write them out on a sheet of paper, numbering the sentences 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, as set out above, then send same, together with a Postal Order for 1s. 6d. (not stamps) for a bottle of our famous Marking Ink, saying whether you want Red or Black, and a stamped addressed envelope for results to

WOLFF & CO., 82 MILTON STREET, LONDON, E.C.

A little trouble will secure you a prize. Write distinctly and fully your name and address, put name of this paper at the top of your letter, and send in your order for the MARKING INK as soon as possible.

The Competition will close on October 30, 1893. The prizes will be awarded and results posted in the following week.

In connection with this exceptional and Genuine Competition, we would particularly point out that competitors will receive not only full value for their P.O.'s in the shape of a bottle of WOLFF'S IMPERISHABLE EGYPTIAN MARKING INK, but the bottle we supply for 1s. 6d., post free, contains three times the quantity usually sold by other makers for 1s., and is the largest bottle of MARKING INK in the market for the price. We are willing to spend a considerable sum of money in advertising our Egyptian Marking Inks, and we prefer doing it in this way to expending it on newspaper advertisements, &c. We ask all competitors who do not receive their Marking Ink in a week to communicate with us again, giving number of their Postal Order.

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I'VE FOUND IT AT LAST.

WHEN I read the fourth of the INDIAN MUTINY stories, entitled "The Lights at the Delhi Gates," I was somewhat dissatisfied with the apparently abrupt finish, and wrote to the author asking him if he could give an explanation of the mystery. He replied saying that had the story been fiction, he could have created a mystery, and, after arousing the curiosity of the reader, explain it away; but these stories are truthful, and the facts stated in them are absolutely correct. The mystery of the Delhi Gate was a mystery to all those in Delhi at the time, and has remained a mystery ever since. If any reader can clear it up I shall be pleased to award a gold-plated pencil-case to the sender of what I consider to be the best attempt.

C. A.—On the whole, Ireland has the most equable climate of any country in Europe.

M. A. S. asks: "Why is it that, generally speaking, female criminals get off with lighter sentences than men?"———It may be that our inborn tenderness towards the weaker sex has something to do with it. But it may also be due to the knowledge that imprisonment has a more severe effect on women than on men, and that equality of sentence does not mean equality of punishment.

ROSE.—No; roses never grow upon the tree which gives us the wood called rosewood. The name was given to that wood because, when cut, it gives off a perfume like that of roses.

T. H.—The obelisk originally represented a ray of the sun—the sun having been worshipped as the Supreme Spirit. They were erected in pairs, usually at the entrance to the temple; sometimes they supported a disc of the sun, and stood upon a pyramid, that combination presumably representing resurrection—life from the tomb. There were priests of the obelisk.

JILL would like to know if there is any daily paper run entirely by women. ———The *Fronde*, of Paris, is the only paper in the world started, written, edited, set up, and printed by women. It is run on the same lines as any other daily, except that its object is to give prominence to women's share of work. A quarter of a million copies were sold of the first issue, and it has been a great success. The reporters are women.

Z. I.—The reading of romances is forbidden by the Koran; hence popular tales are not committed to writing, but are passed from one storyteller to another. No doubt this is the origin of many stories which, although differing greatly in substance, have a common idea as their basis.

F. T.—Small feet are not necessarily pretty feet. The pretty—that is the well-shaped—foot is usually short because the instep is well arched. Greek women had a longer foot than the ordinary man of the present time.

WEED.—Smoking is allowed in the prisons of Belgium only as a reward for good behaviour.

J. L.—It is estimated that only one person in fifteen has perfect eyesight. In many people the left eye is of a focus quite different from that of the right eye. The larger percentage of defectiveness prevails among fair-haired persons.

E. G.—In engineering enterprises there is one man killed to (approximately) every £50,000 spent on work.

JOVIAL asks: "What was the 'Friendly Club,' and is it still in existence?" ———The Friendly Club was established in the City of London in 1695; it was afterwards called the Centenary Club, and appears to have died a natural death some few years ago. It was made famous by its eccentric rules. It had a "father," a "mother," and a high steward among its officers. If the members were honoured in any way, they had to pay a fine. In 1791, a member paid five shillings for enjoying the honour of kissing the hand of the Princess of Wales. As late as 1850 the Lord Mayor paid a like amount because he had the honour of receiving the Prince Consort at the Mansion House.

D. G.—Marseilles is the chief market for the sale and purchase of human hair.

KAH-TAL.—It was noted as a curious fact by Sir Samuel Baker that a negro never tamed an elephant or a wild animal. "You might travel all over Africa," he said, "and never see a wild animal trained and petted by the native." It often struck him that the little children had no animal pets.

ART.—The longest artificial waterway in the world is the Grand Canal of China, extending from Pekin to Canton, a distance of about 1,000 miles.

STONE.—A ruby of the best quality, of more than three carats, is worth more than a diamond of the same size and weight.

CANDLE.—The smoke from the wick of a candle, after it has been blown out, is poisonous; it should never be allowed to vitiate the air of a room. Some men played a trick on a sleeping boy, placing the blown-out candle close to his nose; after half-an-hour the boy's breathing became hard, he had a fit of trembling and cramps, and he died in three days.

L.—Brazil furnishes about half the world's supply of coffee.

PIANO.—Probably the earliest mention of the pianoforte in connection with public performances is that contained in a play-bill dated May 16th, 1767. The principle attraction is given thus: "Miss Buckler will sing a song from *Judith*, accompanied by a new instrument called 'the pianoforte.'"

K. T.—There is nothing extraordinary in the fact that the Eskimo has his kayak, or canoe, made to fit him; if the little craft were a misfit, he would feel just as uncomfortable as you would in a pair of tight boots or a hat several sizes too large.

W.—To drink wine without diluting it with water was regarded as a barbarism by both Greeks and Romans.

MOON.—In many Continental villages—chiefly among the Teutonic peoples—a child born at the time of the full moon is supposed to have the gift of oratory.

N.—The horse succumbs to cold more quickly than any other animal.

SIGN.—Biblical signboards were common at one time, and even now there are no fewer than seven taverns in London bearing the sign of "Adam and Eve." One of these is intimately connected with Sheridan. "The Two Spies" refers to the two Hebrews who reconnoitred the Promised Land; this sign is still in use. "The Bible" was a sign used by booksellers, and up till a comparatively recent date there was a tavern with that sign near Temple Bar. "Samson's Castle" still stands in that part of the Metropolis known as the Borough. Absolom was used by wig-makers.

SHORT STORIES' ADVERTISEMENT RATES.

Single column, per inch, per insertion	£0	10	0
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EIFFEL TOWER LEMONADE

2 GALLONS FOR 4½D

Many people suffer from extreme thirst during the summer. Messrs. Foster Clark and Co. with their EIFFEL TOWER LEMONADE have supplied a want that has so long been felt. EIFFEL TOWER LEMONADE is made from the finest lemons, and the great advantage is that it is partly manufactured in Italy, in the midst of the lemon orchards. The lemons are taken direct from the trees to the factory to commence their transformation into the EIFFEL TOWER LEMONADE. You can get thirty-two tumblers (or two gallons) for fourpence halfpenny. Of all Grocers, or a sample will be sent free for six stamps. G. FOSTER CLARK & CO., No. 115 Eiffel Tower Factory, Maidstone.

Try MASON'S

KILLCORN

The only painless corn cure.

IT HAS NEVER BEEN KNOWN TO FAIL.

Thousands of Testimonials have been received from all grades of society.

READ THIS ONE. Painless Cure!

"Leeds, Mar. 17th.

"Dear Sir,—I had three most painful corns, which were PAINLESSLY REMOVED by using rather less than a bottle of KILLCORN. I now walk with the greatest ease.—Yours, O. B. CARR."

KILLCORN is sold by all Chemists, Stores, &c., in bottles at 1s. each, or sent direct on receipt of value in stamps by the Proprietor,

3, Guildford Street, Leeds.

PALATABLE SUBSTITUTE FOR COD LIVER OIL.

DEVONSHIRE CREAM

(REALLY GENUINE.)

IN PATENT AIR-TIGHT TINS.

½lb., 9d.; ¾lb., 1s. 2d.; 1lb., 2s.

INCLUDING TIN AND POSTAGE.

Mrs. CONYERS,
Morchard Bishop, Devon.

NOSE MACHINE.

This is a contrivance by which the short cartilage of the nose is pressed into shape by wearing the instrument an hour daily for a short time. Price 10/6, sent free for stamps. ALEX ROSS, 62, Theobald's Road, London, opposite Bedford Row. Est. 1850. Parcel free from observation.

HAVE YOU SEEN OUR CATALOGUE OF CHEAP CROCKERY? If not, please get a post-card, and send it to THE

PEARSON POTTERY CO., HANLEY,

and you will get it by return, together with particulars of the most wonderful package of crockery the world has ever seen.

100 PIECES FOR £1 1s.

A Dinner Service of 50 pieces is included, which is guaranteed to be worth the guinea alone, and a China Tea Service of 28 pieces finished in gold, together with a lot of useful kitchen crockery.

THIS IS THE PATTERN OF THE DINNER SERVICE.

THOUSANDS SOLD ALL OVER THE WORLD.

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PEARSON POTTERY COMPANY, HANLEY, STAFFS.

HOULT'S
improved original Electro-chemical
CHIMNEY CLEANER.

Cleans House Chimneys, Stove Pipes, Flues, etc., without the bother of Sweeps or brushes. A Cleaner placed upon a red-hot fire cleans the chimney in ten minutes without mess or dirt.

Beware of Imitations. Insist upon having HOULT'S CLEANERS. NON-EXPLOSIVE.—HOULT'S IMPROVED CLEANERS are the Strongest, Largest, and first in the field. Ask your Tradesman for them. If you cannot obtain them, we will send them post free for 8d.

PRICE
6d.
EACH.

THE "UNIQUE" MANUFACTURING CO., Rotherham.
Telegraphic Address: "Unique Co., Rotherham."

None Genuine Without

THE INVENTOR'S HEAD. (Reg'd).

Dr Tibbles'

MALTATED
BANANA FOOD.
UNIQUE FOR INFANTS & INVALIDS
MAKES A DELICIOUS PORRIDGE
DESCRIPTIVE PAMPHLET OF Dr TIBBLES BANANA FOOD, BISCUITS & OTHER SPECIALITIES FREE ON APPLICATION
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LYLE'S COLDEN SYRUP
LONGEST ESTABLISHED, PUREST & BEST.

ZEBRA Grate Polish.
In Packets or as a Paste in Tins.